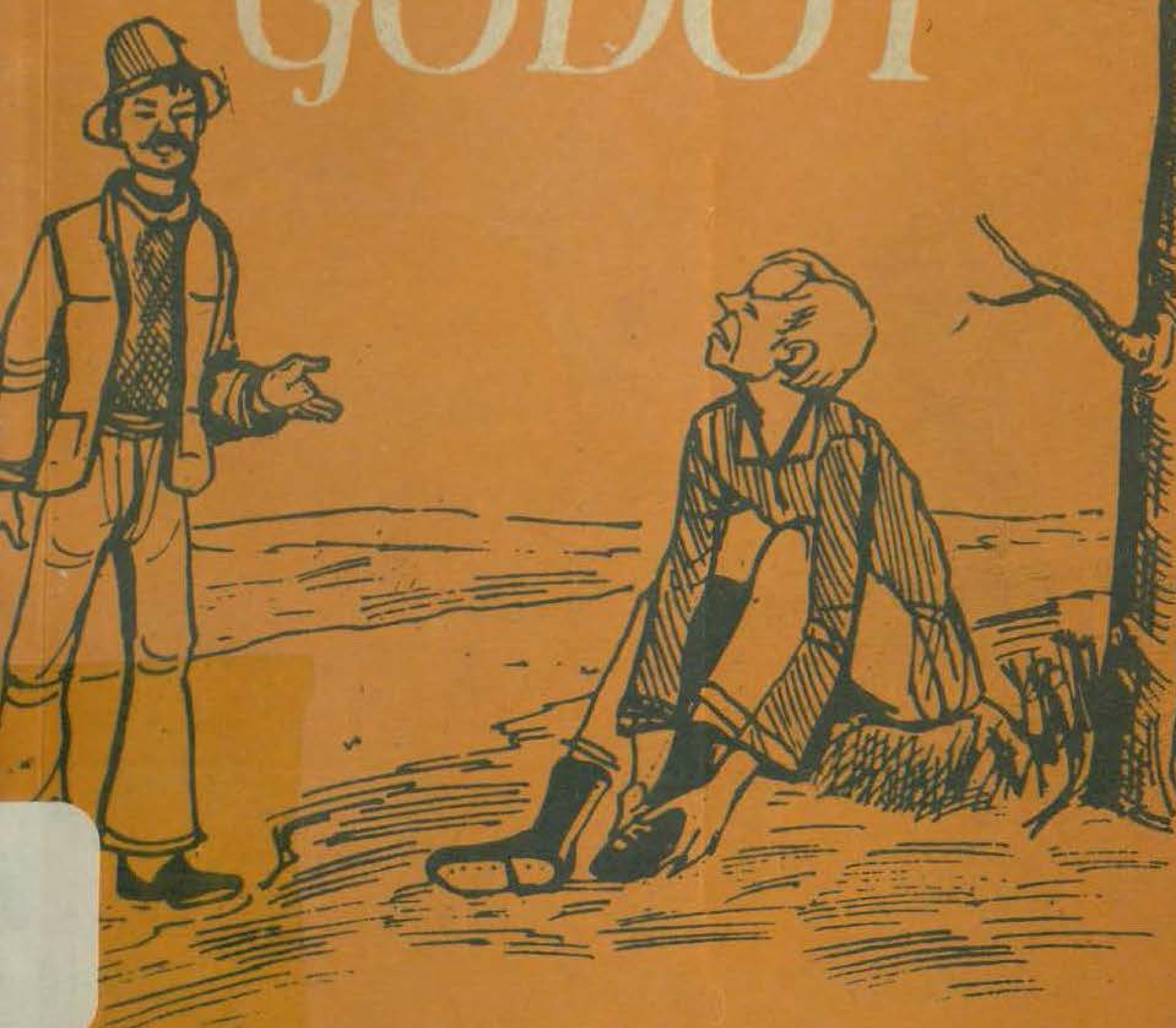
SAMUEL BECKETT

WAITING FOR GODOT



Crit. drama

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PREFACE

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is one of the important landmarks in modern literature. It is a work of great intellectual and moral daring, for it systematically defies all the rules and conventions about the well-made play and yet manages to grip the interest and attention of the reader and playgoer most powerfully. It brings man face to face with the grim reality of present-day existence. Few works have made such a wide and deep impact as *Waiting for Godot.*

The present study is intended primarily for the Hons. and Post-Graduate students of Universities, and their needs have been constantly kept in view. The simple-looking but highly complex *Waiting for Godot* has been elucidated thoroughly and in an easily assimilable style. This has necessitated the explanation and discussion of a fairly large number of textual passages. The study takes note of every important critical issue raised by the play and also acquaints the reader with a wide cross-section of critical viewpoints on Beckett in general and *Waiting for Godot* in particular.

I must express my sincere thanks to the publishers. for the keen interest they have taken in bringing out this book and the cooperation they have extended at all stages of its writing and publication.

September

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1

Life and Career of Samuel Beckett

Birth and Early Life

Samuel Barclay Beckett was the second son of William Frank Beckett and Mary Beckett. He was born on Good Friday, the 13th of April 1906, at Foxrock, near Dublin. His father was a surveyor by profession. The Becketts were a middle class family and were reasonably well-off. They subscribed to Protestantism. Samuel Beckett had the good fortune of being brought up in a congenial, sympathetic environment. He had his schooling at Portora Royal School in a county in Ulster. He had a distinguished school record, which included distinctions not only in studies but also in athletics.

University Education

Beckett joined Trinity College, Dublin, for his higher education He graduated in French and Italian literature with the highest distinction. His interest in games and sports also continued, particularly in chess and cricket. In 1926 he visited France for the first time Characteristically, the visit was in effect a cycling expedition. He completed his university education with great distinction as an all-rounder. The university nominated him as its representative to a French institution of higher learning where he served as a lecturer in English for two years. Before that he had briefly taught in Ireland also.

Beckett in France

As mentioned above, Beckett first visited France when he was a school-boy and later as a teacher of English. He found something congenial to his genius and temperament in that country, which, to all intents and purposes, became his home-land. A very significant contact that he made there was with another countryman of his—James Joyce, the pioneer of the ultra-modern novel. This contact may be regarded as a seminal influence on Beckett. He became one of the earliest and most ardent defenders and champions of this controversial author. He was the most eminent contributor to a

volume of essays which was brought out to silence hostile criticism of Joyce. The point of Beckett's defence was that it was not Joyce who should be blamed for the so-called 'obscurity' but his readers who did not have the patience or the earnestness to unravel his meaning. In fact he made fun of the very ideal of easy comprehensibility, dubbing it the 'conditioned reflex of dribbling comprehension'. The essay has important bearings on Beckett's future writings ; it also brought some fame, or notoriety according to some, to Beckett as an adherent of Joyce who had begun to come in the lime-light. The bond between the two writers rested not merely on similarity of views regarding literature and its function but also on a kinship of temperament.

Early Writings

Beckett's first published work, apart from the essay in the volume in vindication of Joyce, was a poem entitled *Whoroscope*, which brought him a small prize and gained him a modest reputation as a poet. Beckett briefly returned to his parent university, and later brought out a study of Proust which is of far-reaching importance in understanding his own genius. This work came out in 1931 ; Beckett was then a mere youth. Many of Beckett's later concerns as a creative writer are foreshadowed in this work ; it has rightly been considered, by more than one critic, as the best introduction to Beckett. In particular, it is an expression of the despair which is the distinguishing feature of Beckett's writings. It is also a condemnation of facile optimism. It also foreshadows Beckett's obsession with the theme of the flow of time. Beckett sees the flux of time as the most important fact that man has to face ; nothing, therefore, is more bleak for him than having to wait fruitlessly, killing time as the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* are condemned to do : "The individual is the seat of a constant process of decantation, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multi-coloured by the phenomena of its hours." Many critics have found enslavement to time as one of the chief themes of *Waiting for Godot*.

Settles in France

For a few years Beckett remained free of any moorings. He could have made an important academic career for him in the country of his birth if he had cared, but this seemed to have no importance for him. He wandered in England and over Europe for about half a dozen years, before finally settling down in Paris. The period of wanderings is of great significance in the emergence of Beckett as a writer, for it made him imbibe various influences from life at first hand. It was perhaps this wandering life which gave him a fascinated interest in the lives of tramps and vagabonds. However, the immediate outcome of his wanderings was only an insignificant volume of poems entitled *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates*. After

a brief visit to Ireland, he returned to France to fight in the Resistance movement. The fact that his beloved Paris had been occupied by the Germans seems to have deeply disturbed Beckett. It completely changed his attitude to the War which had so far been similar to that of his mentor, James Joyce, that the fighting was inconsequential and victory and defeat were quite immaterial. The Germans' maltreatment of the Jews also made him turn bitterly against them. Beckett threw himself heart and soul into the Resistance movement and became attached to an activist group. Eventually the group was betrayed to the German secret police and Beckett and his wife Suzanne escaped in the nick of time. For several months after that they remained in hiding, for the German secret police was hotly in pursuit of them.

Period of Greatest Creativity

The end of World War II ushered in the most creative period in the writings of Beckett. He could now return to his old apartment in Paris. Many of the works for which Beckett is known were written during the years 1946 and 1950. These included his three connected novels, as well as the world-famous plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. These, and many other works of this period were originally written in French. The reason why an Irishman chose to write his best works in French can best be given in Beckett's own words. According to him a person when writing in his own language "may be tempted to indulge in virtuosity of style for its own sake, the use of another language may force him to divert the ingenuity that might be expended on mere embellishment of style in his own idiom to the utmost clarity and economy of expression." Judging from the actual result, Beckett was not wrong in his decision.

Recognition

Beckett did not spring into fame all at once. His fame was slow to be acquired but it came to rest on solid foundations. His first work to be accorded some recognition was not a play but the novel *Molloy*. The production of *Waiting for Godot* brought this writer, who had been writing for many years before this play was produced, suddenly into the lime-light. The play proved to be as successful in its English translation as it had been in French. Later it was translated into almost every major European language. His second major play, *Endgame*, proved equally successful. Beckett wrote some plays for the radio also. The acme of recognition came with the awarding of the Nobel prize for literature to Beckett in 1969. Although Beckett had the rare honour of seeing his *Collected Works* published in his life-time (in 1970), he has produced creative work even after that and may be supposed to be still in harness. A collection of his later work, entitled *Ends and Odds*, came out in 1977.

2

Major Plays of Samuel Beckett

Introductory

Samuel Beckett's creative writings are by no means confined to drama. His earliest works, in fact, belonged to the categories of literary criticism and poetry. He has also written some novels which have attracted attention. Yet, by and large, it is his plays, written either for the stage or for the radio or television, which have attracted the greatest attention, and therefore he has come to be regarded only as a dramatist.

Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot must be the only example of a drama written by a new-comer to this branch of literature which caught the world by storm. This is all the more remarkable considering the fact that this play has all the features which may be expected to doom a dramatic work to unrelieved failure. It has no plot or action; nothing really happens in it, and this aspect is forced on the readers' attention twice. It has only four characters, two tramps, and a slave and his owner who have no connection with them. In addition there are only two messenger-boys, or perhaps only one messenger-boy who pretends to be a different person in the Second Act. The person after whom the play is named does not even appear in the play. In fact we do not know who he is and why the tramps have really been waiting for him. There is no female character ; ordinarily this alone might be regarded as sufficient to ensure failure. Except for the mechanical speech of Lucky, most of the dialogues of the play consist of only single sentences. The scene remains unchanged throughout. Yet it is a play which is said to have been seen by at least a million people in the first five years after its initial production. This play was written during the most productive period of Beckett, i.e. 1946-50 and was published, in the original French version, in 1952. It was first produced in Paris in 1953. The first translation in English was made by Beckett himself and

was published in New York in 1954. The play was first staged in England in 1955. It was published in England and produced in New York the next year.

Endgame

This play was translated into English in 1957. The play has the strangest set of characters that ever appeared in any work. There are four people in all, and each of them is deformed or handicapped in some way. The person who is nearest to the normal is the servant, Clov, who is seen to move about throughout, for he is the only one of the four characters who can walk. However, he is incapable of bending or sitting down. The second character is Hamm, who may be regarded as the central figure. He is not only blind but is confined to the wheel-chair. Hamm is engaged in telling a story which we are told he has been telling to himself all along The other two characters are Hamm's parents. They are both legless and have been confined to ash-bins. The action is about the servant wanting to leave and Hamm bullying him into staying. At the end of the play Clov seems to have decided to leave. He changes into travelling clothes, but when the curtain comes down he is shown as standing still, watching his master, as though he had again decided not to leave. As is clear, the scene of the play is a single room. An impression is created that these four people are the only survivors of some universal disaster, perhaps a nuclear explosion. It is difficult to resist the temptation of regarding this play as a kind of allegory. The most satisfying explanation is that the play depicts the extinction of life, when the different aspects of a man's personality disintegrate. Hamm may be regarded as the physical aspect of man, but endowed also with emotion. Clov may be regarded as the intellect which strives to become free of the emotional and physical side, but cannot really exist apart from them. The parents in the ash-bins are unconscious memories which have been subjected to repression. It is not clear as to what symbolism Beckett meant to attach to his play but it is obviously one where the literal meaning is less important than what it suggests and leads to deeper levels.

Krapp's Last Tape

This play was first performed in England in 1958. Once again a man's past memories are the focus of attention. He rehearses his old experiences by playing a tape, which was recorded years ago, when he was thirty-nine. Now he is a grey-haired old man. The day is his sixty-ninth birthday. As he plays the tape, he skips the portions he does not like and replays those which specially appeal to him. He goes on eating and drinking as he listens to the tape. He begins to record a new tape, representing his present experiences, but does not go very far with it. There is a mention of another

tape also, made when Krapp was a young man, although this tape is never actually played. The contents of this tape, however, are told to us by the man. Many of the memories, on all three tapes, have to do with love, drink and sex. In addition to contrasting a lost past and a bitter present, *Krapp's Last Tape* also seems an attempt to capture the elusiveness of human personality.

Happy Days

This play was first performed in New York in 1961. The characters are a couple named Winnie and Willie. The first of them is unable to move since she is buried in sand, with only the face outside. Willie's role is very slight ; in any case he is a man of few words. It is Winnie who keeps on talking most of the time, apparently to Willie but really only to the audience. From her talk we form an impression of the type of person she is. Although she gets more and more deeply buried progressively, she remains cheerful. She keeps on talking in spite of what she is going through and neither wails nor complains. She is quite different from the typical Beckett character. Outwardly an expression of optimism, the play is in reality enigmatic, for it seems to tell us that optimism is not going to change the despairing and gloomy nature of human existence, though it may help us to endure it better.

Play

This strangely titled work was first produced in 1963 in its German version. The action here is still more strange, for the characters may be regarded as dead, or experiencing some kind of life after death. They are still encased in urns, with only the head and the face showing outside As in other plays, the only action allowed to the characters is talking ; only in this case they do not enjoy it. In fact talking is a torture, may be even a sort of penance which is imposed on them. They are relating the story of their life and the relation seems to disgust them. They are in a sort of hell and talking about their sins of adultery and sensuality seems to be a way in which they can expiate for what they did in life. A spotlight shifts from the unmoving face of one character to that of the other as each speaks. The reaction of the common reader or spectator, to Beckett's plays upto *Play*, is represented in the following critical comment : "Each time a Samuel Beckett play has a world premiere, the world turns a deeper shade of black. Once his people were hopeful, waiting for Godot ; later they crouched in garbage cans in *Endgame* ; Krapp was moribund while listening to his last tape ; then, in *Happy Days*, the female kept sinking deeper and deeper into a mound. Now Beckett's characters have gone all the way to hell in a play called *Play*. Only the heads of the actors could be seen. Their bodies were inside giant clay urns." Perhaps the play seems to tell that we can never be released from our own consciousness, since the state of release is negative and we can never feel it. Our last memory is that of being imprisoned in our own consciousness after which

we are suddenly engulfed in death and are unable to feel the release.

Radio and Television Plays

In addition to plays for the stage, Beckett also wrote some plays for the BBC radio and television. One radio play is *All That Fall*, first broadcast in 1957. The title is taken from the Bible, and this fact is mentioned in the play itself, since the words in the title form part of a sermon that is to be preached before a village congregation. The play is about a woman's journey to the railway station to meet her blind husband who is arriving by the 12-30 train. She covers a part of the distance in a car, since she happens to meet an old friend who offers her a lift. The train is late, though the reason for its being late is not explained on the station. Later a boy says that the train was late since a child fell out of a compartment and was run over by the train. There is room for thinking that this child might have been pushed out by the blind husband, who confesses that he hates children and often feels compelled to beat or kill them. This is strengthened by the fact that the husband is found to drop a ball-like object which could have belonged to the child he threw out. Another of Beckett's radio plays is *Words and Music* which was first broadcast in 1962. A poet and his two servants are the only characters in this play The servants also compose poetry at the bidding of their master but their efforts are not very successful and the poet is quite disgusted. There is no other action in the play. The play is about the wide gap between the vision in the mind of the poet—the music that he hears—and the words which he uses to embody the vision, as well as the labour and frustration which are inseparable from creative work. *Eh Joe* was a play televised on the BBC in 1966. This was Beckett's first television play. The theme here is a man's regret for having denied love to a woman who loved him, and thus having brought her to commit suicide. The man seems to hear the voice of the dead woman. The man, named Joe, has heard voices earlier also. Those voices also reminded him of his sins and failings. He could cope with the voices only by employing a sort of self-deception. This time, however, there seems to be no escape possible. A remarkable feature of this play is that Joe himself does not speak even once ; in fact most of the time he remains motionless.

Later Work

A collection of Beckett's works was published in 1970. He has produced work after that also. One such work is *Not I* produced in New York in 1972. The essence of this work is that even when there is nothing to express, and no means of expression, the need to express oneself proves compulsive. The later work of Beckett was collected and published in 1977. The collection bears the title *Ends and Odds*.

3

Modern Continental and British Drama

Introductory

In the Renaissance, England was the centre of dramatic activity in the Western world and drama in Europe mainly followed along the lines developed in England. In modern times the trend has been reversed. The first major force in modern drama may be said to have been Ibsen who was a remarkable innovator in form and technique. After him, many of the dramatists who have exercised a formative influence on modern drama were from the Continent. One of them, Beckett, was no doubt British, to be precise Irish, by birth, but the fact that he settled in France and chose to do some of his most significant work in French makes him more a Continental than a British figure.

Influences

Modern drama has its roots very deep in time. Twentieth century drama cannot be fully understood until we go back to the end of the nineteenth century and have a look at the innovations in drama and stagecraft which were taking place at that time, for they made a lasting impact on modern drama. Some of the most important forerunners of modern drama were Ibsen, Chekhov and Strindberg. Ibsen's earliest plays were a corrective to romantic drama and made the middle-classes their focus. He also brought about far-reaching changes in dramatic technique, which were adopted, explained and elaborated by Bernard Shaw in England. The fabric of a typical Ibsen play is social and individual tensions. His accent on the ugly and the evil was quite the reverse of that of the naturalists like Zola, though Zola himself also exercised some influence on the evolution of modern drama. Strindberg claimed that his brand of naturalism was different from that of Zola ; in fact he denied that Zola was really naturalistic. Photographic reproduction of surface reality—what in some quarters is still thought to be naturalism—was not what he was interested in. To him the essence

of naturalism was a critical, scientific and experimental attitude to experience. Anton Chekhov claimed to be a follower of Ibsen. He avoided didactic moralising, and made a faithful reproduction of experience his real aim. He stated that what was obligatory on the artist was to frame social questions correctly : it was not necessary that he should propose a solution to them also, or even that he should at all have views about solutions As can be seen, Chekhov differs markedly in this respect from Ibsen.

Irish Drama

Another seminal influence on modern drama, especially modern English drama, was that of the Irish dramatic movement. One of the earliest important forces in this was J. M. Synge W. B. Yeats was quite in agreement with Synge and was in fact one of his consistent supporters. Synge differs from other modern dramatists in employing light and happy comedy to convey deep and bitter truths. He also advocated that the language of drama should be nearer to the speech of common life. In the case of his own country this would not mean prosaic speech, because he found the everyday language of the Irish peasant to be both witty and poetic. Another important dramatist of the Irish school was Sean O'Casey. Unlike Synge, the accent of Sean O'Casey is on the predicament and the aspirations of the urban Irish. Yeats himself brought to drama the note of mysticism and intense poetry.

More Recent Dramatists

One of the important recent dramatists is Brecht. In contrast with Chekhov, Brecht did not rest contented with the posing and framing of problems ; he also suggested solutions to rectify the evils he depicted. He pays attention not only to the inner man but also to the outer circumstances in which he lives, because they affect him profoundly. He may be said to be one of the founders of the art stage as distinguished from the commercial stage. Some other important figures who played an analogous role belonged to England, and other parts of the United Kingdom, as also U.S.A.

British Dramatists

The most important influence on twentieth century English drama was, of course, that of T. S. Eliot. He took upon himself the task of reviving English verse drama. He was convinced that prose drama, howsoever good it might be in itself, could never stand comparison with verse drama. According to him this was one important reason why the plays of Shaw could not sustain the interest that they aroused. It is interesting to see that Eliot's verdict has now been belied and prose plays have been written which have all the marks of permanence about them. Some important non-European dramatists are John Osborne (*Look Back in Anger*), John Arden (*Live Like Pigs*), and, of course, Beckett himself who can be regarded both as British and French.

4

Drama of the Absurd

Introductory

The dramatists who are regarded as belonging to the theatre of the absurd were not the conscious members of any group or literary movement. They only shared certain common attitudes and a similar interpretation of the human predicament. These dramatists wrote round about the middle of the twentieth century. Some prominent names among them are those of Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter.

Common Outlook

All the writers who are placed in this group, share a common outlook about life and man. They believe "humanity's plight as purposeless in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings... Awareness of this lack of purpose...produces a state of metaphysical anguish which is the central theme of the writers in the Theatre of the Absurd...What distinguishes these figures from earlier dramatists who have mirrored a similar concern in their work is that the ideas are allowed to shape the form as well as the content : all semblance of logical construction, of the rational linking of idea with idea in an intellectually viable argument, is abandoned, and instead the irrationality of experience is transferred to the stage. The procedure has both its advantages and disadvantages." The term itself was first used by Martin Esslin in his book called *The Theatre of the Absurd.*

The Angry and the Absurd

The theatre of the absurd needs both to be compared with and differentiated from angry drama. Brecht is typical of the first, whereas Ionesco is a good example of the latter. The angry dramatist is concerned, for the time being at least, with abuses that can be cured, rather than with ills which are an inescapable part of the human predicament. This is very much like the position of the committed writers. In practice, the various categories present a baffling problem of distinction. According to Hinchliffe a very committed writer like Arnold Wesker yet presents solutions that are

artistic rather than ideological. "If we were to agree that generally Angry Theatre is topical, particular, and political, whereas Absurd Theatre is timeless, universal and philosophical, we should then have to account for Theatre of Cruelty which is angry in intention but absurd in impression! We should also have to answer Martin Esslin's contention that Absurd Theatre, concentrating as it does on basic situations is as relevant socially as plays by social realists, and, since it does not reflect merely topical preoccupations, more enduring because it is unaffected by the fluctuations of political and social circumstances." There is confusion in the form the plays take, also, for both group of dramatists approve of audience participation.

Characteristics of the Absurd Plays

Plays belonging to the category of Absurd Drama have certain recognisable common characteristics. The most striking feature is the one to which Esslin draws attention: these plays violate every canon of successful drama and still achieve phenomenal success: "If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience almost with mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings." Absurd plays are to be distinguished from the work of earlier writers like Anouilh, Sartre and Camus because they do not merely argue about absurdity but actually present it. Similarly, they are to be differentiated from Poetic Theatre because although they, like the latter, make considerable use of dream and fantasy, they do not employ conscious 'poetic' language. They rather favour the bare and the banal. It is a curious fact that though the major absurd dramatists belong to different nations, they converged on Paris as the scene of their activity or attention. Thus Samuel Beckett is an Irishman; Adamov is a Russian; Ionesco is a Rumanian by origin; only one of the important figures is a native Frenchman, Genet. Pinter and Simpson represent the same school in England.

Ionesco

Ionesco's first well-known play was *Amedee* (1954). Ionesco is generally regarded as the spokesman of the Absurdist movement. His basic theme is death and his work possesses a nightmarish quality. He himself says: "I have no images of the world, aside from those which express evanescence and hardness, vanity and anger, nothingness or hideous or useless hate. Existence has continued to appear to

me in this way. Everything has only confirmed to me what I have seen, what I have understood in my childhood, vain and childish furores, cries suddenly stifled by silence, shadows swallowed up forever in night." He has been charged by some critics with being without a message, to which his favourite reply has been that he is a writer, not a postman. According to Hinchliffe, Ionesco has tended to suggest that the opposite of Absurd is meaningful, and that absurdity aims at drawing attention to the lack of meaning in contemporary life. The negative quality of his plays merely reflects the general tendency of Western thought for the last two centuries, to deny the validity of such basic thoughts as 'Aristotle's law on non-contradiction, the principle of casuality and the factor of continuity'. Ionesco has given a new nomenclature to his plays. He tells us that he has called his comedies 'anti-plays', and 'comical dramas', and his dramas 'pseudo-dramas', or 'tragical farces', the reason he gives being that "the comical is tragic, and the tragedy of man derisory. For the modern spirit nothing can be taken seriously, nor entirely lightly".

Genet

Genet was a criminal who began his writing career in prison. His earliest work was a series of prose poems like *Our Lady of the Flowers* and *The Thief's Journal*. There is something akin to obscenity in Genet's work. It has been claimed that Genet's work is in one sense the opposite of that of the Absurdists, for his very astonishment with the way things are going at present means that he believes in and expects things to have a meaning. Or, it may be more correct to say that there are two simultaneous levels of meaning in his work, the conventional one and the Absurdist.

Conclusion

Historians of the drama prefer to believe that the Absurdist movement exhausted itself in the early 1960's. Howsoever true this may be of others, it is certainly inapplicable to Beckett, who has continued to produce play after play, even after his existing work has been published as *Collected Works*. Ultimately, it is Beckett who is the most substantial and the most popular of the creative writers of 'the school of Paris' who are grouped under the title 'the Absurdists'.

5

Samuel Beckett as a Dramatist

Introductory

To a large number of cultivated readers all over the world, Beckett is known as the author of some powerful and thought-provoking dramas. Yet he himself would perhaps not be happy with such a reputation. He looks upon himself as primarily a playwright rather than as a mere dramatist. Beckett's conception of a play is very inclusive ; the plays are written with an eye on the accessory effects—stage props, sounds, lights—which will help the intended meaning to emerge fully. Watching a Beckett play is no mere entertainment ; it is a total involvement of personality, for his plays are 'total theatre'. It is doubtful if, ever since the dawn of dramatic activity, any one ever made such important innovations in stagecraft and dramatic production and writing as Beckett has done.

Their Impact

It is not possible to see (or even read) a Beckett play and then forget it. They have a deeply disturbing influence on the mind of the spectator or reader, because they challenge some of his fundamental assumptions about life and living. One of his recent critics observes : "Beckett's plays stay in the bones. They haunt me sleeping and waking, coming upon me when I am least aware. Sometimes a stray bit of conversation heard by accident on a bus or in a restaurant brings home some of Vladimir's and Estragon's little canters. Sometimes I find myself actually reacting like Clov or like Hamm, or more often, like both simultaneously. Sam's character always seems to me more alive and more truly lasting than in those slice-of-life realistic dramas with which our stages today abound." A fellow dramatist calls Beckett the most courageous and remorseless writer of the day. He gives him perfect emotional and intellectual satisfaction : "I don't want philosophy", he says, "tracts, dogmas, creeds, way-outs, truths, answers, *nothing from th? bargain basement*." Another critic styles

Beckett as an artist of deprivation and terminal depression (i.e. the depression one may feel on the eve of death) : "He has expressed his vision of desolation with unique power He has pushed all the way to the end logically, emotionally, artistically ; one does not need to read every word he has written to admire the courage and purity of his efforts to identify with it, and to recognise the cost." A woman critic credits Beckett with the ability to affect and move us deeply : "In spite of his modesty, he manages to express his immense compassion for all human life...because he is one of those exceptional men and women to whom love and lucidity are on the same level." More than any other play, *Waiting for Godot* may be regarded as a test of cultivation and sensibility. *Endgame* is another Beckett play which has deeply coloured modern sensibility. In the words of Esslin : "If *Waiting for Godot* shows its two heroes whiling away the time in a succession of desultory and never-ending games, Beckett's second play deals with an 'endgame', the final game in the hour of death. *Waiting for Godot* takes place on a terrifyingly empty road, *Endgame* in a terrifyingly claustrophobic interior. *Waiting for Godot* consists of two symmetrical movements that balance each other ; *Endgame* has only one Act that shows the running down of a mechanism until it comes to a stop."

Characteristics of a Beckett Play

A typical Beckett play has certain recognisable characteristics which differentiate it from the work of other writers. They have no plot or action in the ordinary sense of the word. Nothing really *happens* in them, in fact the very sense of them is that there is nothing really significant that can happen in the world of today. Similarly their lack of surface meaning is meant to reflect the utter meaninglessness of modern existence. There is little movement on the stage—in some of the plays there is *no* movement whatsoever. Beckett has no characters in the ordinary sense. In one of the plays there are two faces, rigid and immobile, which are fixed in urns, and they talk throughout the play. In *Waiting for Godot* the non-action of futile waiting is enacted twice. The setting is nothing more than a bare tree on a lonely road. The only change in setting that takes place is that in the Second Act the tree is shown with some leaves which have sprouted on it. In this and several other plays there are no female characters. Even when there are, Beckett does not exploit their feminineness for any purpose. One effect of such a thing is that the plays create an effect of timelessness and universality. They are independent of age, country and nation. In *Waiting for Godot* we are not told who Godot is and what the two characters really expect him to do for them. When Beckett was asked to say something about Godot, he is reported to have answered that if he did know anything, he would have mentioned it within the play. Moreover, the very fact that a play like *Waiting for Godot* lacks a clearcut surface meaning, endows it with a richness of possible significance. It has even been

said that the fruitless waiting of the two tramps in *Godot* symbolizes mankind's wait for the Messiah.

The Beckett Hero

Although the concept of the 'hero' is not really applicable to Beckett's plays, since, among other things, many of his plays give equal attention to more than one character ; yet we may mention the typical features of the chief character (or characters) in a representative play of Beckett. It may be presumed that such a character has many features of the author himself. He is rootless, experienced, but disillusioned. He knows life to be futile, but lives it out courageously, howsoever drab and dull it may seem. He is generally suspicious of poetic utterance and expresses his meaning in direct, bare words. He is deeply concerned about the problems of life and time, and seems visibly shattered because he has failed to discover a meaning in life in spite of desperate attempts to find it. He has generally no illusions, and if he has some, he is aware that they are illusions and does not let them deceive him beyond a certain degree. The characters admirably bring out Beckett's chief concern, which is to depict the bleak human situation on this barren planet and puncture all shams and pretences. The form of a Beckett play is indeterminate, it is some half-way house between comedy and tragedy, and as such much more true of real life than either pure comedy or unalloyed tragedy.

Beckett's Language

Beckett's language is so bare and functional that he seems to devalue it ; yet this is only a surface impression, for only a real master of language could be content to use words so simple and austere. In fact a historian of twentieth century poetic drama goes to the extent of saying that the best poetic drama of the century is to be found in Beckett's prose plays. "For want of a better tool language has been moulded into an instrument for naming the unnameable, and Esslin concludes that this recognition of absurdity is once more the starting-point of exhilaration and freedom : 'For to know nothing is nothing, not to want to know anything likewise, but to be beyond knowing anything, that is when peace enters, to the soul of the incurious seeker.' It might, for most of us, however, be the peace that passeth all understanding, were not it for the central paradox of Beckett's work." Unlike some other modern dramatists, Beckett has never cared to explain or to talk about his work. In fact he has said that his favourite art form is one which would give expression to the fact that "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." Beckett's art is revolutionary ; it is poles apart from bourgeois art.

6

Critical Introduction to Waiting for Godot

Writing, Production and Publication

Waiting for Godot was written during the half dozen years (1945-50) when Beckett's genius was at its white heat and his output was most prolific. The play first appeared in print in 1952. It was produced for the first time on January 5, 1953 in Paris. It not only proved, against all expectations, to be a tremendous immediate success but ran for four hundred consecutive evenings. Later on it was staged at another theatre in Paris. In 1954 Beckett's English translation of the play was published in U.S.A. The world premiere of the play was performed in London in 1955, on the 3rd of August. It has been estimated that no fewer than a million people witnessed performances of this play during the first five years of its staging. In addition it was translated into all the major languages of Europe as well as into several other languages.

Atmosphere

There is something enigmatic in the atmosphere of the play. Its mixture of comedy and near-tragedy proves baffling, and at first we are not sure as to what attitude we should adopt towards the different phases of its non-action. The situation of the tramps is funny; yet we dare not laugh at it, for there is something fundamentally human in it. We do not know who Godot is, for whom the tramps are waiting, but we do not condemn their futile waiting, for it uncomfortably reminds us of our own expectation of some golden age, or some divine saviour, for whom the whole human race is waiting. Lucky and Pozzo appear both revolting and fascinating. Lucky's speech is at the same time ludicrous and disturbing. The ways by which the two tramps pass the time seem funny at first sight, yet we feel that all of us, at some time or the other, pass our life in such transparent deceptions. Moreover, Vladimir and Estragon indirectly ridicule modes of civilised life, when they pretend to treat each other with civility. There is a

mixture, rather a confusion, between reality and unreality in the behaviour of the two tramps in the Second Act. In fact we get a feeling that the 'second' messenger-boy might also be a victim of a failure of memory and that he may in reality be no different from the messenger of Act I. The mysterious Godot, who does not look like coming, but for whom the tramps must wait under all circumstances, arouses a lot of curiosity. We want to know the mysterious hold he has over these two tramps ; we also want to know what it is that they hope he will do for them. It is made all the more mysterious by the mention that before giving his reply to the tramps, Godot will have to consult his friends, his family as well as his bank and account book. The relationship between Lucky and Pozzo, as well as their personalities, also creates much curiosity. Most fascinating of all, what seems farce from one viewpoint, appears to be something deadly earnest from another viewpoint. It is not possible to adopt any set or decided attitude towards these. For example, the endless wait of the tramps seems to be absurd, yet the fact is that they are conscious of this absurdity, and seem to imply that the rest of the world is waiting for things which are more absurd and also more uncertain than the coming of Godot. The tramps, therefore, consider themselves to be more fortunate. This idea is expressed by Vladimir in a way which is partly ironical at their own expense as well as at that of the rest of the world : "What are we doing here, *that* is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come." It is difficult to resist the interpretation that the situation of the tramps is an allegory of the human situation.

Critical Estimates

Although some critics have expressed only a sense of bafflement with *Waiting for Godot,* many have praised it as a revolutionary contribution to modern drama. Esslin, for example, appreciates the 'basically religious quality' of the play. He holds the convincing view that the action of the play is not about Godot but about waiting. In fact an earlier version of the play carried the title *Waiting*. Fraser prefers to regard *Waiting for Godot* as a modern morality play, comparable to *Everyman* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It has been plausibly suggested by one critic that the title of Beckett's play is derived from Odet's *Waiting for Lefty*. A still more convincing suggestion is that the title owes its origin to Simon Weil's play *Waiting for God,* especially because Beckett knew Weil's work well and his own play appeared a year after Weil's. Another claimant for the derivation of the title is Tom Kromer's *Waiting for Nothing*. Some of the dialogues in this work closely resemble those in Beckett's play. The play has been claimed by several critics to represent the

Existentialist position in so far as it depicts the full horror of the human situation. This is challenged, or at least considerably diluted, by the view that being an Absurdist play it is markedly different from Existentialist writing. One critic is of the view that *Waiting for Godot* is a mixture of the Absurd and the absurd : "In this play form and content, absurdity and Absurdity, are organically related...there is coalescence of the Absurd...and the human condition." Various interpretations have been offered as to what the two tramps, Pozzo, Lucky and the absent Godot stand for. The significance of Lucky's speeck is an important aspect of the critical study of this play. Critics have identified one or the other of the characters of the play as Godot in disguise.

7

Persons and Places in Waiting for Godot

(A) PERSONS

(1) Estragon	:	One of the two tramps. He was formerly a poet.
(2) Gogo	:	Estragon's pet name.
(3) Vladimir	:	The second tramp. He once used to cultivate grapes.
(4) Albert	:	This seems to be Vladimir's first name.
(5) Didi	:	Vladimir's pet name.
(6) Pozzo	:	A tyrannical landlord who owns the place where the tramps are waiting. In the Second Act he is shown as blind.
(7) Lucky	:	Pozzo's slave who used to be quick-witted and entertaining once. In the Second Act he is shown to have become dumb.
(8) Godot	:	The mysterious stranger for whom the tramps are waiting
(9) A Boy	:	A messenger-boy who brings messages from Godot. The 'Boy' of the Second Act claims to be a different person.

(10) Abel	:	A Biblical character. He was murdered by his elder brother, Cain. Pozzo is called by Estragon by this name.
(11) Cain	:	Adam's eldest son ; the first murderer in the world according to the Bible. Pozzo responds when called by this name also.

(B) PLACES

(1) Macon country	:	The region where Estragon and Vladimir used to work in the past.
(2) Cackon country	:	The region where the events of the play are supposed to take place.
(3) Rhone	:	A river flowing through Germany etc. Estragon tried to commit suicide by throwing himself into it.
(4) Eiffel Tower	:	A steel monument in Paris. The tramps think that they ought to have committed suicide by throwing themselves down from it.
(5) Pyrenees	:	A mountain range in France. The tramps think of going there.

8

Synopsis of Waiting for Godot

ACT I

Tramps in Waiting

Two tramps are waiting for someone named Godot on the roadside. The tramps are named Estragon and Vladimir. They are tired of endless waiting, but apparently they dare not go away without meeting the mysterious stranger, or being told by him that the appointment for that day is cancelled. Since there is nothing to be done, the tramps pass the time by talking about various things, sometimes with no other aim than merely that of killing time. One of them asks the other as to where he spent the night. His answer is that he spent it in a ditch and that as usual he was soundly beaten by some ruffians. The first tramp, Vladimir, then takes credit for having made the other's existence possible ; but for him he would have been nowhere. The two recall the time when they could afford to be decently dressed. On one such occasion they visited the Eiffel Tower. They ought to have utilised that opportunity for committing suicide by jumping down from the tower. Now it is too late, for they are so scandalously dressed that no one would allow them to go up the tower. One of the tramps fiddles with his boots, takes them off and looks earnestly into them as if he would find Godot there ; the other does the same with his hat. Estragon's boots, are difficult to take off. The tramps talk about the crucifixion of Christ, one of them wondering why only one account of it mentions that of the two thieves who were to be crucified along with Christ, only one was saved. The other tramp says he is not much interested in the Bible.

The Mysterious Godot

Again and again one or the other of the tramps suggests that they have waited enough and should now move away. Invariably, the other answers that they cannot go away, for they are waiting for

Godot. They begin talking about the tree beside which they were required by Godot to wait for him. One of them says that it is a willow tree, but a tree which has now become dead. The tramps are not certain whether Godot would come even that day ; but this does not make much difference ; in that case they would come and wait for him the next day and like that endlessly. They are not agreed whether they waited for Godot at the same place the previous day also. They are not even certain as to what request they originally made to Godot and what they now expect him to do for them. Once they hear a sound and think that Godot has come, but they find that the sound was only of the wind blowing through the reeds.

Pozzo and Lucky

The tedium of endless waiting is varied by the arrival on the scene of a man, Pozzo, who holds another, Lucky, tied to a rope. Lucky is carrying a number of articles. Pozzo treats Lucky savagely, beating him with the whip, and giving painful jerks to the rope which is tied round his neck. He also abuses him. Pozzo dines on chicken and wine before the hungry tramps. Estragon chews the bones thrown away by him. The tramps are intrigued by the fact that Lucky does not ease his burden by placing the bags he is carrying on the ground. Pozzo does not give any satisfactory answer to this, apart from saying that he carries the bags all the time because he wants to. Pozzo is taking Lucky to a fair where he will sell him. In order to entertain the tramps, Pozzo orders Lucky to dance for them. Later he asks him to entertain them by 'thinking' in their presence. At this Lucky delivers a sort of speech which is not tc his master's liking. It seems that Lucky's thinking can be interrupted only if his hat is snatched away. Pozzo and Lucky then move away.

The Messenger-Boy

A messenger-boy comes and tells the tramps that he brings a message from Godot. Godot would not be able to come and meet them that day. They coax and bully the boy to get more information out of him but fail. He only tells them that his master has said that he would not come that day but will surely come the next day. The tramps are in a hopeless situation but try to cheer each other up.

ACT II

Changing Moods

The tramps are on the scene again. There are only two minor changes from Act I. A few leaves have sprouted on the tree. It seems

that the boots left behind by one of the tramps have been taken away by someone who left his own boots back instead. Vladimir sings a song about a hungry dog who stole bread and was killed as a punishment for his crime. Vladimir and Estragon give expression to their affection for each other. However, although they say that they find each other's company indispensable, they also admit that each feels better in the other's absence. As usual, Estragon was beaten last night also, this time by ten men.

Waiting Resumed

They wait for Godot once again. Again the problem of killing time faces them. Estragon seems to have forgotten all that they did the previous day. He does not even remember that they were there the previous day, waiting for Godot. He finds it difficult to believe, but Vladimir is emphatic and reminds him of many things that they said. He tries to make him recall that they had considered the idea of hanging themselves from the tree but gave it up because the tree seemed to be too low for that purpose. All Vladimir's efforts, however, fail and Estragon refuses to recognise anything in the scene before them or to admit that they waited there on the previous day. They pass the time by playing meaninglessly with the hat or the boots. Estragon mentions a frightful dream that he had last night. They find Lucky's hat lying there. This suggests to them a new way of passing the time : they pretend to be Pozzo and Lucky. They try various other ways of passing the time, like going through various movements as in exercise.

Reappearance of Pozzo and Lucky

Pozzo and Lucky appear once again, but they are vastly changed from what they were the previous day. Pozzo has now become blind and Lucky is dumb. Estragon is not even able to recognise them and wants to know if one of them is Godot. As Lucky falls, he brings down Pozzo with him. The tramps consider the idea first of helping them to their feet and then of beating them. In trying to help the two strangers, the tramps also fall down and find it difficult to get up. Finally they do help Pozzo to his feet but he falls down again and again. He seems to have lost his memory also.

The Second Message

An end is put to the torture of the evening by the arrival of a messenger-boy. They believe that he is the same boy who came there earlier but he denies having done so. Thereupon they are forced to conclude either that he has lost his memory or that he is that brother of the messenger-boy who was mentioned by him the previous day. The message is once again the same : "Godot is not coming that day but will surely come the next day."

Conclusion

The tramps must come again the next day and wait for Godot as before. They think that it would be better to put an end to their own lives. There is nothing with which they can hang themselves. Estragon offers the cord with which his trousers are held in place. Vladimir points out that they must first see whether the cord is strong enough. As Estragon takes away the cord, his trousers slip to his ankles. The two tramps pull at each end of the cord to test its strength. The cord snaps into two. The pieces are too small to be of any use in hanging. They decide to bring a rope with them the next day, and to hang themselves with it unless Godot comes and saves them. They are now to leave for the night. Vladimir reminds Estragon to pull on his trousers before leaving. He does so. Although they say they are going away, as the curtain comes down they are still standing there.

9

Outline Story of Waiting for Godot

ACT I

Two Friends Meet

Estragon is sitting on a low mound and trying to take off his boots. After trying to pull them off with both his hands he becomes exhausted and gives up the effort. After resting for a while he resumes but has to give up once again, exclaiming : "Nothing to be done." In the meanwhile, Vladimir enters, walking with short, stiff steps. Taking Estragon's words in a larger sense, he expresses his agreement with them. Both the tramps express happiness at meeting each other again and voice the fear that they thought they had lost each other for good. In answer to Vladimir's question Estragon mentions that he spent the last night in a ditch, and that some people beat him up as usual. Vladimir takes credit for having stood his friend in good stead all these years. However, he admits that their struggle has been of no use. They ought to have jumped off Eiffel Tower in the nineties when they were presentable enough to be allowed up there. Estragon does not take much interest in his friend's talk and tells him rather irritably to help him in the job of taking off his boots.

The Boot and the Hat

Estragon becomes desperate when his efforts to take off his boots prove futile. He almost tears at them. He again asks his friend to help him, reminding him at the same time to button up his fly. In the meanwhile, Vladimir takes off his hat, peers inside it and then puts it on again. Estragon makes one mighty effort and succeeds in pulling off one boot. He looks inside it, shakes it and turns it upside down, expecting something to fall out of it but nothing happens. Vladimir repeats the action about his hat. Estragon says he will air his foot a bit before putting on the boot again. The foot

has become swollen visibly. Vladimir repeats his earlier action with the hat once more.

Biblical Talk

Vladimir asks Estragon if he ever read the Bible. The latter answers that he read the Gospels and remembers the maps of the Holy Land. They showed the Dead Sea as pale blue and the very sight made him feel thirsty. Vladimir alludes to the Biblical story about the two thieves. These were to be crucified at the same time as Christ. One of the two was saved while the other was damned. It seems strange to Vladimir that of the four Gospels wh'ch describe the crucifixion only one mentions that one of the thieves was saved. Two of the Gospels do not mention any thieves and the third states that both the thieves were damned because they abused Christ. It is curious that people believe the one dissenting account as if it were the only version in existence.

The Situation

Estragon is sick of the place and wants to leave. Vladimir reminds him that they cannot leave for they are waiting for Godot. Estragon asks him if he is sure that they were asked to wait at this place. Vladimir says that they were to wait by the side of the tree and points out that it is the only tree near about. He thinks the tree is a willow, but Estragon insists that it is only a bush. Vladimir resents the insinuation that they are waiting at the wrong place. Estragon observes that Godot ought to have come, but Vladimir points out that he did not say for certain that he would come. If he did not come that day, he might come the next day, or the day after that. Estragon complains that they came there the previous day also. Vladimir contradicts him, though he cannot answer his question as to what they did on the previous day. Estragon then doubts whether they were asked to wait this particular evening. Vladimir answers, somewhat doubtfully, that Godot had mentioned Saturday. Estragon questions whether the day really is a Saturday. Estragon then requests his friend to stop talking for a minute.

Thoughts About Suicide

The two tramps make desperate efforts to pass the time by telling anecdotes to each other. Estragon becomes irritated and the two almost have a fight. At last they make up and embrace. Estragon proposes that they should hang themselves. Vladimir appreciates this mode of suicide because, he says, it would give them sexual gratification. Estragon feels excited to hear this. Vladimir alludes to the legend about the mandrake, a plant which is popularly believed to grow under the gallows. Estragon suggests that they should hang themselves immediately. Vladimir says that the difficulty

would be about the place from where they should hang. He thinks the tree before them is not strong enough. Estragon makes a suggestion that Vladimir should be the first to hang from the bough because he is heavy. If the bough can sustain his weight it would certainly bear Estragon's weight because he is lighter. Estragon puts an end to the topic by saying that it would be better and safer for them not to do anything at all.

Talking About Godot

They fall to talking about Godot once again. Estragon asks his friend what it was that they had asked Godot to do for them. Vladimir answers that they didn't ask anything very definite ; they had just made a sort of prayer to him. Godot had given no definite reply ; he had said he would see. He could not promise anything to them straightaway because he would have to consult his family, his friends, his agents, his correspondents, his books and this bank account before taking a decision. They are absolutely a Godot's mercy. For a moment it appears to them that there are sounds suggestive of the approach of Godot, but finally they dismiss it as the sound of the wind in the reeds. Estragon is hungry. Vladimir gives him a carrot to eat. Just then they hear a terrible cry and run away to hide in safety from the approaching danger.

Lucky and Pozzo

Two newcomers enter the scene. One of them is Pozzo who drives the other, Lucky, by means of a rope tied round his neck. Pozzo bears a whip in his hand. Lucky is carrying a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a great coat. Seeing the tramps Pozzo gives a sudden jerk to the rope and Lucky falls to the ground along with his burden. The tramps feel like helping Lucky to his feet but are restrained both by their own apprehension and by Pozzo's warning that Lucky is vicious. Estragon is sure that Pozzo is Godot. They admit that they are waiting for Godot but Estragon says that he would not be able to recognise him if he saw him. Pozzo tells them that the place where they are waiting is his land. Pozzo gives some nasty pulls to the rope, telling the tramps that he is trying to wake up his servant who drops off to sleep whenever he gets the chance. He orders Lucky to hand him various things and Lucky obeys. He takes out a piece of chicken and a bottle of wine from the picnic basket and has a meal. The tramps watch Lucky who seems to sway into sleep while still on his feet and then wake up, every few moments. They notice that there is a running sore round Lucky's neck. They want to speak to Lucky but Pozzo asks them to leave him alone. Estragon begs of Pozzo to let him have the chicken bones which he has thrown away. Pozzo says he has no objection provided Lucky doesn't want them. Pozzo asks Lucky whether he wants the bones but the latter does not reply. Estragon is told that the bones are his and he greedily snatches at

them and begins to gnaw them. Vladimir is unable to repress his dislike of Pozzo's treatment of Lucky and says aloud that it is a disgrace to treat another man thus. Estragon, still gnawing at the bones, expresses agreement with his friend. Then he puts the bones in his pocket.

Lucky's Bag s

Estragon is puzzled as to why Lucky carries the bags all the while. He could make himself comfortable by placing the bags on the ground. After a lot of fuss, Pozzo answers the question. Lucky has the right to make himself comfortable ; if he doesn't do so it must be because he does not want to. Pozzo believes that Lucky's action is meant to please him, so that he is persuaded to keep Lucky. Vladimir asks Pozzo again and again if he wants to get rid of Lucky. At last he answers that he is going to sell him at the fair, though it would be a far better thing to kill him. Hearing this, Lucky weeps. Pozzo gives Estragon his handkerchief and asks him to wipe away Lucky's tears since he feels so much pity for him. Estragon hesitates. Vladimir tries to snatch the handkerchief out of his hand, saying that he will wipe Lucky's tears. Estragon refuses to give him the handkerchief. At last he approaches Lucky to wipe his tears but Lucky kicks him violently in the shins. Estragon howls with pain.

Entertainment

Pozzo speaks some high-sounding words and then wants to know the tramps' opinion of his performance. They praise him warmly. He is gratified and wants to know if there is anything he can do for them in return. Estragon says that they would welcome even a few small coins, but Vladimir protests that they are not beggars. Pozzo offers them several choices—they can either have Lucky dance for them, sing for them, recite to them or think before them. Estragon suggests that Lucky should first dance and then think. Lucky dances mirthlessly and Pozzo explains that he calls the movement the dance of the net. Lucky is then asked to think. Giving a jerk to the rope, after the hat has been put on his head, Pozzo asks the slave to think. Lucky begins to speak as though he is midway in a speech. A little later all the three jump on Lucky, the tramps as though to save him from misery, and Pozzo because he is disgusted with Lucky's abominable thinking. After this Lucky shouts out his words. He reduplicates several of the words, e.g. he says 'Acacacacademy' instead of 'Academy'. He repeats some of the sentences also. As he gets stuck on the word 'unfinished', Pozzo instructs the tramps to remove his hat. Vladimir does so. The result is that Lucky's thinking is terminated. Lucky falls. Pozzo tramples on his hat. Lucky is unable to be on his feet and falls down again and again. Pozzo asserts that he is doing so on purpose. Pozzo requests the tramps to help him in raising Lucky to his feet.

They do so once but he falls down as soon as they discontinue supporting him. At Pozzo's request they raise him and hold him up once again. Pozzo puts one of the bags in Lucky's hand but the latter drops it immediately. After several efforts, Lucky at last regains his normal self and clutches the handle of the bag tightly. The tramps withdraw their support. Lucky totters briefly but does not fall. Pozzo discovers that he has lost his watch. Pozzo and Lucky exit, the former pulling at the rope and cracking the whip at the latter.

Waiting Resumed

When Lucky and Pozzo have left, Vladimir remarks that their arrival helped them pass the time. Now they must use their own devices to pass the time. Estragon suggests that they make a little conversation. They make a tentative start, Vladimir saying that the two people they have met have changed a great deal. In the meanwhile a boy comes and asks for Mr. Albert. Vladimir asks him to approach and tell them what he wants. The boy is timid and holds back, at which Estragon orders him to approach. He announces that he has a message from Mr. Godot. Estragon demands why the boy is so late. He pleads that he was afraid of the others. He tells them that he has been there a good while. He admits that he was afraid of Pozzo's whip. Vladimir seems to have met the boy before. He suggests that the boy was there the previous day also, but he denies this. The message is that Mr. Godot would not come this evening but he would surely come tomorrow. They try to get him to say more but fail.

End of the Evening

When the tramps release the boy he goes away running. All at once it is night, with a pale moon in the sky. Estragon suggests that they might keep on waiting for Godot at the same place, but Vladimir reminds him that they must take cover for the night. Estragon looks at the tree wistfully and says it is a pity they do not have a piece of rope with which they could hang themselves. He asks his friend to remind him to bring a piece of rope the next day. Estragon mentions how he fell into the river once and Vladimir fished him out. Estragon is bitter and says that it would have been better if each one of them had been left alone. Vladimir answers that they could still part if Estragon wishes so, but he replies that it is no longer worthwhile. They decide that they must go now, but they are not shown to be moving as the curtain comes down.

ACT II

The Setting

The place is described by a stage direction to be the same as in Act I. The time also is the same but one whole day has passed. Estragon left his boots back in Act I, saying that they might be useful to somebody with smaller feet. Now the boots are seen to lie in the centre of the stage. Lucky's hat is also there. The tree of the First Act can be seen but it has now four or five leaves growing on it. This time it is Vladimir who enters first. He sings to himself a song about a dog who stole a crust of bread and was beaten to death by the cook.

The Meeting

Estragon enters soon afterwards. Estragon affects to be disgusted to see Vladimir again, but after a while they are friendly to each other. They embrace and clap each other on the back. At the end of the embrace Estragon almost falls down. He says that it hurt him to see his friend singing. He thought he was expressing his happiness at having got rid of Estragon. Vladimir admits that he did feel happy in his absence but says that it is all a matter of one's moods. Vladimir says that Estragon always comes back to him because he cannot defend himself. He claims that he would have defended Estragon against the men who beat him last night if he had been with him. Estragon replies that he could not have done so because there were ten of them. Vladimir remains insistent, observing that he could have stopped Estragon from doing whatever it was that offended the people who beat him. Estragon pleads that he was not doing anything. They end by admitting that they are both happy to be together again. But the problem is—what shall they now do, now that they are happy. The answer to this is the same as before—they must wait for Godot.

Talking About Godot

They fall to talking about Godot once again. Estragon wonders what they would do if once again Godot fails to turn up. Vladimir says that they must not worry about it before the time comes. He feels that things have changed since yesterday. One of the changes he can even pinpoint—the tree has a few leaves growing from it now. Estragon seems to have forgotten much of what happened yesterday and Vladimir makes a patient and painful effort to remind him. Once again their problem is that of passing the time. They make brave efforts at conversation. The conversation halts every few seconds. Now and then they pause to praise their own efforts at conversation. Estragon thinks that it is only another of Vladimir's nightmares that they were there the previous evening. Vladimir points to Estragon's

boots which are still lying there as a triumphant evidence of what he has said. Estragon remembers that he abandoned his boots because they were hurting him. However, after examining the boots Estragon exclaims that they are not his. Vladimir is amazed to hear this. Estragon points out that the boots are a different colour. Moreover, they are a different size. They agree that it would be a good relaxation as well as recreation for Estragon to try on the strange boots. He is agreeably surprised to find that the boots fit him, or rather that they are a little too big. Estragon goes to sleep, while Vladimir sings a sort of lullaby.

Lucky's Hat

Vladimir notices Lucky's hat and picks it up. This gives him the idea that they might play at being Lucky and Pozzo. Vladimir says he will play Lucky while Estragon must pretend to be Pozzo. He asks Estragon to curse him and the latter does so in the manner of Pozzo. His first attempts, however, are rather feeble. For a while Vladimir pretends to play both parts simultaneously. Estragon disappears briefly, only to come back running into his friend's arms. He says they are coming to beat him. Vladimir prefers to think that it is Godot who is coming and that they would now be saved. It occurs to them that they could pass the time by abusing each other. They call each other many fancy bad names, including curate and critic. Their next move is to make up. They do this in a rather ostentatious manner. Then they do some exercises.

Lucky and Pozzo Again

Lucky and Pozzo enter the stage again. They have changed a great deal. Lucky is dumb now and Pozzo has gone blind. Estragon once again mistakes him for Godot. Pozzo seems to be in trouble and cries for help. Estragon would do so only against a heavy price. Pozzo finally offers them two hundred francs. In their efforts to help Pozzo on his feet the tramps also fall down and can get up only with a great deal of difficulty. They pretend that Pozzo and Lucky are Abel and Cain. Pozzo seems to have forgotten what took place there the previous day. At last Lucky manages to get up and picks up his burdens again. Pozzo narrates that he suddenly went blind one day and that Lucky became suddenly dumb in the same fashion.

The Messenger-Boy

Once again the messenger-boy arrives. He claims, however, that it was not he who brought the message the previous day. The tramps conclude that it must have been his brother of whom the boy had spoken. The message is the same as the one brought yesterday. Godot is sorry that he cannot come that evening but he will

surely come the next day. The tramps realize that the evening's wait is now over and that they must return to do the same the next day.

The Attempted Hanging

Estragon proposes that now they must hang themselves. But there is no rope with which they can do so. Estragon says that they can use the string with which he keeps his trousers in place. As he removes the string the trousers fall to his knees. Vladimir says that they must test the strength of the cord. They pull at it from opposite sides. The cord breaks into two. It is useless for hanging purposes now. The tramps must go away for the night. They must come and wait for Godot again. As Estragon says, 'Let's go', the curtain comes down. The two tramps have not moved from their place.

10

Detailed Summary of Waiting for Godot

ACT I

Scene and Setting

The setting for the act is, as described by the playwright, a road in the countryside, by the side of which a tree is growing. The tree is short and leafless. The tramps identify it differently as a shrub or a willow-tree. There is a mound nearby, on which a tramp, Estragon, is sitting as the play opens. There is no other thing or person visible. Estragon is engaged in the action of pulling off one of his boots. It seems to have stuck fast, for it refuses to come off even though Estragon tries to pull at it with both his hands. The effort of doing so exhausts him and so he gives up from time to time, only to resume again. As the second tramp, Vladimir, enters, Estragon has given up the effort once again and exclaims in desperation : "Nothing to be done".

Enter Vladimir

The entrance of Vladimir, and the first words he speaks, set the tone of the play. Vladimir seems to be in some pain; for the stage-direction describes him as "advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart". He gives a larger significance to the remark which his friend has made about his failure in taking off the boot that is hurting his foot. Vladimir states that he used to be full of hope once, and in the face of every failure used to tell himself that he has not exhausted every avenue, but that now even he is coming round to the view that there is "nothing to be done"

Estragon and Vladimir

After expressing his own sense of defeated hope, Vladimir gives expression to a sense of satisfaction that Estragon is there again. Taking his friend's words metaphorically, Estragon doubts

his observation, saying, "Am I" ? Vladimir ignores this interruption and says that he is glad Estragon is back again, for he was afraid that his friend had gone away forever. Estragon's answer is to say that even he believed that he would not return. Vladimir remarks that the occasion deserves a celebration but, perhaps realising that they have no means of celebrating, he is content with a physical exhibition of his happiness and affection. "Get up till I embrace you", he says. Estragon is much too worried with his boot to enter into the spirit of his friend's request and says rather testily : "Not now, not now". Vladimir is naturally hurt at being thus repelled and shows his sense of hurt by speaking sarcastically. Addressing his fellow-tramp as His Highness he asks his permission to enquire where he spent last night. His Highness' answer is delightful in its unexpectedness—"In a ditch". Moreover, Estragon adds, in answer to another question of Vladimir, he was beaten last night, as usual. Vladimir is evidently sorry to hear this but thinks that somehow Estragon himself is to blame in some way and that if he had been with him he would have saved him somehow or the other. This does not, however, mean that Vladimir is contented with their present situation. Only, having to take care of Estragon, he seems to think, aggravates his misery. Vladimir is not hopeful, he has reached a stage which is beyond hopelessness. He believes they committed a great mistake by not putting an end to their lives by jumping down Eiffel Tower fifty years ago when they would have been allowed to go up there. It is too late now, for they are so unpresentable that nobody would let them go there.

The Little Things of Life

While Vladimir is talking about the past, Estragon is bothered about the immediate present. Rather than submit to a wild show of affection from Vladimir, he would prefer to have his help in pulling off the troublesome boot. Vladimir takes no notice of the request but blames Estragon for causing the trouble to his feet by disregarding his advice that boots must be taken off every day. Estragon repeats his request for help. Vladimir parries the question once again and asks his friend whether the boot hurts him. The unnecessary question quite upsets Estragon who gives vent to his sense of resentment. It is now Vladimir's turn to protest. He blames Estragon for thinking that he is the only one to suffer and that Vladimir does not count. Without spelling out what he himself is suffering from, he asks Estragon what he would say if he was suffering from the same trouble. It is now for Estragon to ask the same question—does it hurt ? Vladimir's reaction is again that of resentment at being asked a question which is so obviously unnecessary. Estragon's counter-attack is to draw Vladimir's attention to his open fly and to ask him to button it up, howsoever hard he may be pained in that region. Vladimir does so, remarking philosophically that one must never ignore the little things of life. Estragon and Vladimir then indulge in talk which obviously relates to the latter's disease which has something, apparently, to do with

the state of his kidneys but which is absolutely lacking in specific references. Both the friends then indulge in another 'little thing' of life. Vladimir's hat seems to be annoying him. He takes it off and subjects it to a close examination and thorough knocking and shaking as though he expected some foreign body to fall out of it but nothing happens. Estragon has, in the meanwhile succeeded, after a superhuman wrench, in taking off his troublesome boot. He also subjects it to a process similar to the one which Vladimir has adopted in the case of his hat. In this case also, nothing falls out. Vladimir has quietly put on his hat again ; he suggests to Estragon to do the same in the case of his boot, but the tramp says that he would like to air his foot a little, first. Vladimir is sarcastic and says that Estragon is blaming on his boots the fault of his feet.

Biblical Talk

Another round of conversation now begins. Without any connection, Vladimir refers to a situation in one of the Gospels and quotes a sentence : "One of the thieves was saved". He adds that one out of two being saved is quite a reasonable percentage. Continuing in the Biblical mood, he asks Estragon whether it would not be better if they repented. Not aware of any glaring sin that they have committed, Estragon naturally wants to know what they should repent of. Vladimir's answer is interesting—they might just repent, without going into details. Estragon suggests a sin—that of being born. Vladimir enters into the spirit of the joke and laughs heartily, but the laughter is momentary. It causes intolerable pain to him, so that he stifles the laugh, with his hand pressed over his pubic region. He says that he dare not laugh any more : Estragon calls it a dreadful privation. Vladimir says that he can only smile, but this does not give him the same satisfaction as laughing. He then asks Estragon whether he ever read the Bible. Estragon's reply is that he looked into it once and was fascinated by maps of the Holy Land, especially by the fact that the Dead Sea had an inviting pale blue colour which tempted him to drink its water and to dream of spending his honeymoon there. Vladimir forgets his original question and remarks that Estragon ought to have been a poet. Estragon's comment on this is delightful. He says he *was* a poet, and points to his ragged clothes as proof of the fact. Vladimir has quite forgotten what he was originally talking about. In order to tide over the void, he asks Estragon about his foot. In the meanwhile he remembers the original subject and asks his friend if he remembers the story about the two thieves in the Gospel. Estragon says that he does not remember it ; in reply to another question from Vladimir he says that he does not want to hear it either. Vladimir begins relating it all the same. There were, he says, two thieves who were crucified along with the Saviour. One is supposed to have been saved and the other damned. Estragon wants to know what one of them was 'saved' from. Vladimir answers that

he was saved from damnation. Estragon's way of showing lack of interest in the story is to say that he is going. This does not disturb Vladimir who continues, saying that out of the four Evangelists who refer to the incident only one speaks of a thief being saved. Two of them don't speak of any thieves and the third says that both the thieves were damned. Only one of the Evangelists says that there were two thieves to be crucified along with Christ and one of them was saved. Vladimir tries to arouse interest in Estragon, even though artificial, by requesting him to play the game once in a while and carry on the conversation which he has started. Estragon does so with exaggerated enthusiasm, saying that he finds the point being made by his friend to be really most extraordinarily interesting. It is clear that neither of the tramps really cares for the story, for after referring to the third Evangelist, Vladimir himself forgets what he was saying, and as for Estragon, his level of attention may be measured from the fact that he says to Vladimir : "What's all this about ?" He also tries to confuse Vladimir by doubting whether it was death or damnation which the thieves wanted to escape. This phase of the conversation closes with Vladimir's expression of surprise that people should implicitly believe the version of the fourth Evangelist as though it were the only one in existence and Estragon remarking that people are bloody ignorant apes.

Next Phase

The tramps then engage themselves in talk and activity which is more than commonly inconsequential. Then there is a ritual consideration of their condition, something which is to recur many times. Estragon proposes to Vladimir that they should go and Vladimir replies that they cannot. Estragon wants to know why, and the fellow-tramp replies—because they are waiting for Godot. At this Estragon groans. He cannot contradict Vladimir directly but he tries to shake him in every other way. He first asks Vladimir to assure him that it was at this place that Godot had asked them to await him. Vladimir is startled by the question and answers that they were asked to wait by the tree and there is no other tree around. There is then a brief discussion about the identity of the tree. Vladimir thinks it is a willow. Estragon first says he does not know what tree it is, then adds that it looks more like a bush He also jokes that if it had been a willow they ought to see it weeping. There are no leaves on the tree either. Vladimir thinks it might be a dead tree, or that it might not be the season for leaves. Estragon has first said that the tree is a willow, now he amends his statement to say that it is a shrub of some sort. In the meanwhile Vladimir recollects that they were actually not discussing the tree but Estragon's query whether they were waiting for Godot at the right place. He asks Estragon point-blank whether he thinks they are waiting at the wrong place. Estragon does not give a direct reply but interposes that if they had been waiting at the right place, they would have

seen Godot by now. Vladimir replies that Godot did not say that he would definitely come. If he did not come that day they must return and wait for him on the following day, and then on the next until they met him.

Estragon's Tactics

Estragon now shifts his tactics slightly. He suggests that they came to this place yesterday also to wait for Godot. Vladimir says he is mistaken in thinking so. He dares Vladimir to point out what they were doing last evening if they did not come here. Vladimir is unable to answer the question and this fact quite irritates him. Vladimir patiently continues his effort to convince his friend that they are at the right place and that he ought to recognise it. Vladimir now questions whether they have come to wait for Godot on the right day. Vladimir replies that they were told to wait on Saturday, but his confidence in his memory seems, clearly, to be shaken. He says he must have noted the date down somewhere. He tries frantically but is unable to locate the paper on which he made the note Estragon once again deftly changes his tactics Assuming that the appointment was for Saturday, he now doubts whether today really is Saturday ; it might be any day from Monday to Friday. Poor Vladimir is by now completely baffled. Estragon requests a minute's interruption in the conversation. Vladimir concedes this, with the result that Estragon immediately goes to sleep. Vladimir shouts him awake. Estragon has had a dream in the meanwhile. He desperately tries to tell this dream to Vladimir but the latter puts up a determined resistance. He also attempts to relate to his friend an anecdote about a drunken Englishman who went to a brothel but Vladimir would have none of it.

A Possible Way-Out

Conversational overtures having been temporarily exhausted, Vladimir now asks Estragon as to what they are to do. The latter says that they must wait for Godot. Vladimir clarifies that he means what they are to do while they wait. Estragon makes a radical suggestion : what about hanging themselves ? Vladimir approves of the suggestion for the reason that it would give them an erection and cause an ejaculation. He explains to Estragon that the ejaculation is the reason why a mandrake, which grows under the gallows, shrieks when it is pulled out of the ground. Estragon is eager that they should have the experience at once. The only thing they can hang themselves from is the bough of the tree but Vladimir doubts whether it is strong enough to bear their weight. Estragon says they can find out by actual trial. Vladimir tells him to go ahead and try. Estragon does not accept the suggestion. He points out that the reason given by Vladimir in support of his proposal is actually an argument against it. Since

he says Estragon is the lighter of the two, it is Vladimir who should make the attempt first. Otherwise, it might happen that the bough might bear Estragon's weight and break when it is Vladimir's turn, thus leaving the latter all alone in the world. Vladimir tries to shift his ground by doubting whether he really is the heavier of the two but Estragon does not let him do so. Their conclusion, at least for the time being, is that they need not do anything, that would be far safer. Moreover, let them first at least see what Godot has to offer them.

The Tramps and Godot

The next step, quite logically, is to consider their expectations from Godot. The reader is surprised to know that there is little room for the tramps harbouring any high hopes here. Estragon wants to know what exactly they asked Godot to do for them. Vladimir says it was nothing very definite. Estragon adds that it was only a kind of prayer. Vladimir agrees. Estragon then wants to know how Godot had replied to their supplication. He had, Vladimir answers, replied that he would see ; he would have to think it over. For some time the two tramps speak alternately, repeating the words of Godot. We learn that Godot had said that before replying he would have to consider their prayer calmly in the quietness of his home. He would have to consult his family, his friends, his agents, his correspondents, his books and his bank accounts. It would be only then that he would be in a position to take a decision. They have no option but to wait and then accept whatever he decides.

Pozzo and Lucky

The tramps get external help for some of the time in passing the long period of waiting for Godot. That happens when the landlord, Pozzo, and his carrier, Lucky pass that way. Lucky is a slave who is treated worse than an animal. Pozzo holds him on a rope and frequently jerks the rope cruelly when he wants the slave to pay attention to his orders. Lucky carries an assortment of baggage which his master might need on the journey. He holds the baggage even while standing still—something which puzzles Estragon so much that he asks Pozzo repeatedly to explain why Lucky does not place the burdens on the ground while they are not on the move. Pozzo also carries a whip which he cracks at the carrier every now and then. The tramps, especially Estragon, take Pozzo for Godot but are soon undeceived. Pozzo informs them that they are waiting on his land ; they apologize and tell him that they mean no harm.

Pozzo's Meal

Pozzo gives a quick series of orders all of which are soon carried out by the slave. He takes his coat and hands the whip to

Lucky and the latter does this one by one and holds the whip in his mouth, for both his hands are occupied for the moment. He then helps his master on with the coat. After that he hands the whip, as desired by Pozzo, back to him. He then opens a folding stool and places it near Pozzo. He hands the basket to Pozzo, who takes from it a piece of chicken and a bottle of wine. He has his aristocratic open-air meal in front of the famished tramps and throws away the chicken bones after gnawing them. Even the bare bones are tempting to Estragon, who asks Pozzo whether he might have them if Pozzo does not want them now. Vladimir is irritated by this action of his friend but Estragon does not seem to care for his disapproval. Pozzo replies that he does not personally need the bones any longer but that, by rights, the bones belong to the carrier, whose permission Estragon must take. Pozzo asks Lucky but the carrier shows no interest, something which surprises him because it is so unusual. At a signal from Pozzo, Estragon at once makes a dart at the bones and starts munching them, much to the disgust of Vladimir. Later, he puts some of the bones in his pocket.

Sympathy For Lucky

The plight of Lucky excites the sympathy of the tramps. They notice a running sore on his neck, caused evidently by the chafing of the rope. The carrier looks worn-out. He also does not seem to be all right mentally, for he is dribbling at the mouth. His eyes are popping out of his head. Vladimir is sure that he is suffering from hypothyroidism. Vladimir is so much upset that he exclaims that it is a shame to treat a human being so shabbily. Not to be outdone, Estragon, still gnawing the bones, adds that it is a disgrace. Pozzo is on the defensive. He tries to humour them by asking them their age etc. He smokes a pipe and chats to the two tramps. Then he smokes another pipe. Vladimir says more than once that he wants to go. Pozzo at first just requests him to stay on, and at last reminds him of his appointment with Godot. In the meanwhile Estragon once again puts his question about Lucky and the bags. After a lot of preparation and attracting attention, Pozzo at last answers the question. According to him Lucky is free to put down the bags if he likes to. He deliberately does not do so because he hopes to impress his master in this way. He wishes to dispose of the slave and is taking him to a fair for that purpose. He believes that Lucky's plan is to impress his master by carrying the burdens all the time so that he keeps him in his employment. He declares that the slave is mistaken in thinking so, a worthless creature like him deserves to be killed rather than just sold away. Hearing these words, Lucky begins to weep. This arouses the sympathy of the tramps, one of whom, Estragon, approaches him timidly to wipe away his tears with a handkerchief which Pozzo has given him for this purpose. While Estragon is off his guard, Lucky gives him a mighty kick in the shins which sends him away howling.

Estragon believes that he has been crippled and would not be able to walk for the rest of his life.

Lucky's Accomplishments

The tramps want to know why Pozzo wants to get rid of such an old faithful servant as Lucky. Pozzo replies that Lucky used to be invaluable to him once upon a time. All the nice thoughts and phrases that he himself has, were acquired from Lucky. Lucky used to think beautifully then; he still does so but the quality of it makes Pozzo shudder. He is going to sell him because he gets on his nerves unbearably. In fact this is driving him mad, he claims. The same Lucky once used to be so kind, so helpful, almost Pozzo's good angel. A little later Pozzo claims that he spoke all these words in the heat of the moment and does not at all mean them. He asks them to pay no attention to what he has said, adding that they can easily see that he is not the type of man who can be made to suffer by a slave. Pozzo makes a speech about the beauty of the evening and Estragon and Vladimir, at a hint from Pozzo, praise his eloquence in extravagant terms.

Reward

Pozzo expresses himself greatly pleased by their courtesy and announces that he wishes to reward them for it. Estragon senses a material reward and remarks that even ten francs would be a welcome gift for them. Later Estragon brings the amount down to five francs. Vladimir does not like this beggar-like attitude and says so, but Estragon pretends not to understand him. They soon realize, however, that Pozzo has another sort of reward in mind. He wishes to provide them with some entertainment by Lucky, who can sing, recite or think for them as they like. It is decided that Lucky should first dance and then think. Lucky's dance is very melancholy. It is called the Dance of the Net. Then Lucky 'thinks' aloud, shouting out a torrent of words without a single pause or stop anywhere. On the surface Lucky's words appear to lack a meaning, but in reality they speak of the misery of the human race in spite of all the outward progress that it has achieved. The idea is so unsettling that even the tramps cannot bear to hear it. And as for Pozzo he seems to be suffering acute anguish all the time. All three jump on Lucky and at last put him to silence. A little later Pozzo and Lucky leave.

The Last Phase

The evening's wait has now reached its last phase. In a little while it would be night, after which they need wait no longer. After the exit of the strangers Estragon says, as before, that they should go away. Once again Vladimir reminds him that they cannot go because they are waiting for Godot. They must once again devise

some conversation in order to pass the time. They seem pretty desperate, and at their wits' ends, now. They question, contradict and placate each other for no other reason than that the ball of conversation must be kept rolling. Vladimir pretends that he knew Pozzo and Lucky before and that they could not recognise him because nobody does recognise them these days. As for himself he just pretended not to recognise them. It is clear to the reader that Vladimir is pretending when he says so. Estragon goes hobbling to the mound saying that it is now the other boot that has started hurting him.

The Messenger-Boy

A boy arrives with a message from Godot. Actually he has been there for quite some time but did not come forward because of the fear of Pozzo and Lucky. Estragon upbraids him severely for the delay. Vladimir questions him for a long time about other things before taking Godot's message. The boy says that he has a brother whom Godot beats because he does not like him. He himself gets on quite well with his master. Vladimir asks him if he is unhappy or not, and the boy replies that he doesn't know. The boy is glad to make his escape and goes away running. As he leaves the light suddenly fades out and the moon, shining pale and dim, becomes visible. Estragon says that the moon is pale for weariness, of climbing heavens and looking on the likes of Estragon and Vladimir. The tramps make ready to leave. Estragon leaves his boots behind, in the hope that they would be of use to somebody whose feet are smaller than Estragon's own. Vladimir points out that he would then have to walk barefooted. Estragon answers that Christ also did so. Vladimir dislikes the comparison with Christ ; Estragon says that all his life he has been comparing himself with Christ. Vladimir says that Christ could afford to walk without shoes because he lived in a hot and dry country. Estragon agrees with him and adds that Christ was crucified quickly. Vladimir tries to console his friend by saying that things will be all right tomorrow. Estragon wishes they had a piece of rope to hang themselves with. He asks Vladimir to remind him to bring some rope with him the next day ; Vladimir promises to do so. Estragon reminds his friend of the time when he threw himself into the river and Vladimir fished him out. Vladimir says that it is of no use to recall all those things. Estragon once again harks to the theme that they should part from each other. He believes they were not made for the same road. Vladimir says that they can still part if Estragon thinks it would be any good Estragon says it would be of no use now. They decide that they should go away now. The curtain comes down, but the tramps have not moved from their place.

ACT II

Scene and Setting

The playwright begins Act II with the information : "Next Day. Same Time. Same Place." That means the action takes place by the side of the country road, with a tree growing by its side and a mound nearby There is some change in the tree, for it is now covered with four or five leaves, whereas it was quite bare and leafless in Act I. Also, the boots left there by Estragon can now be seen lying in the front part of the centre of the stage. Vladimir is the first to make an entry. After looking in the distance on both sides of the stage in an attitude of expectancy he begins to sing to himself.

Vladimir's Song

Vladimir's song is a depressing one. It relates the story of a hungry dog who steals into a kitchen and takes away a piece of bread crust. The cook arrives there and beats the dog with a ladle till it is dead. Other dogs arrive there. They dig a grave for the dead dog and write an epitaph on it to caution other dogs. The epitaph is nothing but the account of how this dog lost its life. As Vladimir is about to sing one of the stanzas of the song again, his friend, Estragon, arrives there.

The Meeting

Vladimir is pleased to see Estragon and, as in Act I, offers to embrace Estragon. The latter is much more irritated at this than he was in the earlier act. He asks Vladimir not to touch him. Vladimir at this holds back in pain. Vladimir then asks the same question as he did in Act I : where did Estragon spend last night ? Instead of answering this question, Estragon tells him peremptorily not to touch him, question him or even talk to him. However, he asks him pleadingly to stay with him. Vladimir is as ever his affectionate self and says that he never deserted Estragon, but the latter points out that he allowed him to go away alone and get beaten. By now Estragon's anger and resentment have melted away and he allows himself to be embraced by Vladimir.

Estragon's Grouse

Estragon now clarifies his grouse against his friend. He resents the fact that he was singing in his absence. It means that he was happy to be separated from Estragon and was celebrating his happiness in song. Vladimir frankly confesses that he did feel happy, but pleads that it is all a question of one's moods which nobody can control. Vladimir says that he was not only happy but felt better

even as regards his kidney trouble. Estragon holds even this to be a proof that Vladimir is relieved to be rid of Estragon. However, he admits that he also feels better in Vladimir's absence. Vladimir is provoked at this and asks Estragon why, in that case, he always comes creeping back to him. Estragon does not mind this show of anger and says frankly that he does not know. Vladimir remarks that it is because Estragon is unable to defend himself. He claims that he would have saved Estragon from a beating if he had been with him. Estragon claims that he could not have done that since there were ten of them. Vladimir clarifies that he meant he would have saved Estragon by preventing him from provoking the ruffians, rather than by beating them off. Estragon protests that he was not doing anything when they beat him. Vladimir cannot believe this ; in any case, he insists, it is not what one does that matters but the way one does it. Estragon, he claims, is far less observant than Vladimir. Estragon once again insists that he was not doing anything, but to no avail.

The Ritual of Conversation

The long wait is once more before the tramps and they have to fall back on their conversational resources to help time pass quickly. Vladimir suggests that deep down Estragon must also be happy, though he does not know it. Estragon wishes to be told what he is happy at or about. Vladimir's answer is that he must be happy to be back with his friend once again. Estragon is doubtful on this point. Vladimir tutors him to say that he is happy. Estragon's resistance breaks down and he admits that he is happy. Vladimir says the same. Estragon thereupon destroys the make-believe by putting a very uncomfortable question : what are they to do now that they are happy ? Vladimir's answer is : wait for Godot.

Recalling Yesterday

Beginning another phase in the conversation, Vladimir remarks that things have changed since yesterday. Estragon falls in with his mood and says that everything is oozing. Vladimir points Estragon's attention to the tree. Estragon looks at it, but remarks that it must have been there yesterday also. Vladimir counters that what he wants him to recall is that they almost hanged themselves from that tree the previous day. Estragon is incredulous and says that Vladimir must have dreamt the whole thing. Vladimir finds it difficult to believe that Estragon has already forgotten the happenings of yesterday. Estragon's reply is to say that that is how he is constituted : he either forgets a thing immediately or does not forget it at all. Vladimir refers to Pozzo and Lucky and asks Estragon if he remembers them : it turns out that Estragon does not. Vladimir expresses amazement that Estragon should have forgotten everything. At this the latter states that he does remember a lunatic who gave him a nasty kick in the shins and afterwards played the

fool. Vladimir points out that the person who did both these things was Lucky. Estragon remembers the incidents but doubts that they could have taken place yesterday. Vladimir asks him if he remembers the keeper of Lucky. Estragon does, for the man gave him a bone. Vladimir tries to make Estragon recall that the person who did so was Pozzo. Estragon still cannot believe that the incidents they are discussing took place on the previous day. Vladimir then resumes his attempts to make Estragon recall the events. He asks him whether he does not recognise the place. Estragon is offended and wants to know what there is to recognize about it. He protests that he has spent all his beastly life in mud and muck and Vladimir is now talking to him about scenery. Estragon gets worked up more and more and Vladimir tries to calm him down. He asks him gently that he must at least be able to see that the place around him is not the same as the Macon country. Estragon wants to know what the Macon country has to do with what they are discussing. Vladimir points out that Estragon himself was in the Macon country at one time. Estragon is unprepared to believe even this : he insists that he has passed all his wretched life here in the Cackon country. Vladimir says he could swear that they were both there together picking grapes at a place whose name he cannot recall, for a man whose name also eludes him. He suggests that Estragon might tax his brain and try to recall the names, but the latter pleads that he did not notice anything, even if they were there as Vladimir claims. Vladimir is exasperated and exclaims that Estragon is a hard man to go along with. Estragon counters that in that case it is better if they parted. Vladimir's answer to this is the same as he gave in Act I : if they parted, Estragon would still come creeping back to him. Estragon's reaction is to say that it would be better if his friend killed him.

Self-Approval

Vladimir remarks that every man must wait for his death which will come at its own time and in its own peculiar way. Estragon shares this view and proposes that they should in the meanwhile engage themselves in conversation, since they are so constituted that it is impossible for them to remain quiet. Vladimir agrees that their capacity for talking is inexhaustible. There are, however, reasons, quite apart from their inborn propensity, why they talk so much. Between the two of them, the tramps spell out these reasons. Talking saves them from hearing the voices which clamour for attention. These are the voices of the dead Their sound is like that of the moving of wings. It is like the rustling of leaves. It is like the falling of sand. The voices speak all at the same time, though each one speaks to itself. They seem to be whispering. Their sound is just a murmur. They talk about their own lives ; it's not enough for them to have lived ; it is not even enough that they have died, but they must talk about it all the same. They make a noise like feathers.

Awkward Moments

The inventive power of the tramps suddenly leaves them and they are hard put to it to carry on the conversation. Vladimir prompts Estragon to say something and he pleads that he is trying his best to do so. Vladimir is suffering deeply in the silence and prays to his friend to say just anything. Estragon at last succeeds in contributing to the conversation : what should they do now, he asks. Vladimir's reply is the standard one : wait for Godot. The situation is becoming unbearable. Estragon suggests that Vladimir might sing something. Vladimir declines doing so, but he suggests that they might begin over again. Estragon gives his view that it would be quite easy to do that. Vladimir adds that it is only the start that is difficult. Estragon differs : one can start from anything. Vladimir points out that the difficulty lies in making the decision where to start. Estragon agrees to this. The conversation now becomes desperately inconsequential. Vladimir asks Estragon to help him ; the latter says he is trying to do so. Vladimir remarks that when one seeks something one hears voices. Estragon agrees that this is so. Vladimir adds that this very fact stands in the way of one's finding anything. Here also Estragon assents. Vladimir continues that this prevents one from thinking. Estragon implies that he differs with Vladimir on this point, for one thinks all the same. Vladimir cannot believe that this is so. Estragon is inspired by Vladimir's contradiction of his point : he says that they might play the game of contradicting each other. Vladimir then reiterates his earlier disagreement. He states that although they are no longer in the danger of thinking anything, there are worse things than thinking. Estragon agrees half-heartedly, adding "at least there's that." His friend naturally wants to know what he is referring to. This suggests another conversational game to Estragon : they should ask each other questions. At this Vladimir repeats his earlier question and Estragon explains that he meant that at least there would be so much misery the less. Estragon then has another suggestion about keeping the conversation going : they might express gratefulness for the small comforts that are allowed to them. Vladimir insists that being saved from thinking further is not such a relief : it still remains a horrible fact that they were once subjected to the ordeal of thinking. Estragon wonders whether they ever actually went through the ordeal. Suddenly the two disputants find themselves in agreement. If they were never forced to think, where could all these corpses of thought have come from. Vladimir is sure they must have thought a little. Estragon adds that they might have done so right at the start of their lives. The world, Vladimir cries, is a charnel house. Estragon comments that one needn't look at it, but Vladimir says that one just cannot help looking. Estragon suggests that they might turn from this horror to the world of Nature. Vladimir observes that they have tried even that but it proved even worse than thinking. Having reached the end of this phase of their

conversation, the tramps pause to admire their own efforts. However, Vladimir returns to reality by drawing his friend's attention to the fact that they must now find something else to occupy their vacant waiting. Estragon admits that this is so. Both of them take off their hats, scratch their heads and think hard for a subject to talk about. Vladimir seems to have reached somewhere, he makes an exclamation of relief and puts on his hat. Both the friends look relaxed. However, Vladimir's discovery does not turn out to be a very momentous one. He merely says that if Estragon could remind him of what he was saying they could carry on from there. Estragon is unable to help Vladimir here. Vladimir slowly goes over the events of the evening. First they embraced, then they said they were happy. Then one of them said what they are to do now that they are happy. The other had replied that they must go on waiting as before. The only other thing he can remember is the tree, and he points his friend's attention to it.

The Tree

Estragon wants to know what is so special about the tree. Vladimir remarks that the tree was all black and bare yesterday, but now it is covered with leaves. All this has happened in a single night. Estragon observes that it only means spring has set in. Vladimir objects that this could not have happened in a single night. Estragon recurs to his earlier objection that they were not at this place yesterday, that Vladimir has dreamt the whole thing. Poor Vladimir has once again to try to convince Estragon that they were there yesterday, waiting for Godot till night-fall.

Vladimir's Efforts

Vladimir first pulls up Estragon's trousers and shows him the wound caused by the kick which Lucky administered him. The wound has now begun to fester. This fact, however, does not help Estragon recall what Vladimir wants him to recall. Vladimir then reminds Estragon of his boots. He shows him a pair of boots lying on the stage and tells him that these are his boots which he left there the previous day. Estragon goes towards them, looks at them and says they are not his, for his were a shade of grey but these are greenish. Vladimir tries the boots on Estragon's feet and they are found to fit him, whereas his own were much too tight for him. Estragon finds this to be another proof of his contention that they were nor here the day before. Vladimir tries to rationalise the situation. According to him some other person came there who found his own boots too tight and discarded them for Estragon's which just fitted him. Estragon is unable to follow Vladimir's argument but he does not contest his view. Vladimir suggests that Estragon might keep these boots since they seem to fit him better than his own. The boots have now no more conversational possibility left in them. Estragon is quite exhausted and sits on the mound, assuming a foetal pose. Vladimir sings some sort of a

lullaby. After a little while, Estragon wakes up with a start. It seems he had a dream in which he found himself falling from a great height. Vladimir tries to calm him down, though he is not prepared to hear what his dream was. Estragon once again suggests that they should go and Vladimir gives the stock answer : they can't go since they are waiting for Godot. Estragon emits a groan, as before.

Other Devices

The two friends are desperately in search of other devices which might help them pass the time. Vladimir notices Lucky's hat lying there. He picks it up and places it on his head, handing his own over to Estragon. The latter removes his own hat and tries Vladimir's. Like this they keep on rotating the hats for quite some time. All three hats fit both the tramps. Lucky's hat gives Vladimir the idea that they might play the game of imitating Pozzo and Lucky. They provide some delight to the reader by calling each other interestingly original bad names like Gonococcus and Spirochaete. Vladimir dances like Lucky. Their antics are interrupted by a voice that they hear. Estragon has briefly left the stage ; he now comes back rushing into Vladimir's arms. He is afraid 'they' are coming. Vladimir wants to know how many they are, but Estragon is unable to tell. Vladimir believes it is Godot who is coming. He exclaims that he has come at last, and they are now saved. Estragon is still sure it is some persons who are coming there to beat him. He tries to escape but it seems that all ways are barred, since he hears voices on every side. Vladimir also seems to share his apprehension. He tells him to hide behind the tree. Estragon does so, but the tree is not substantial enough to provide a place of concealment. At last Vladimir admits that there is nothing he can do to escape or hide. He must stand on one side and resignedly await the arrival of whosoever is coming. Since nobody comes for quite some time, Vladimir remarks that Estragon must have had a vision. The two first indulge in a silly bit of formality and then begin to shout highly original terms of abuse at each other. The climax of these words is 'critic', which leaves Vladimir quite vanquished. Estragon suggests that they should now pretend to make it up with each other. They do so, following up their words of reconciliation with an embrace. Now mere words won't suffice to pass the time ; therefore, Vladimir suggests that they should do their exercises as they await Godot. And that is what they do, going through their elevations, relaxations, their elongations and their warming up exercises. Estragon says he is quite tired and gives up. Vladimir suggests that they should do some breathing exercises. Estragon replies that he is tired of the very act of breathing. Vladimir still perseveres and balances himself on one leg.

Pozzo and Lucky Again

Pozzo and Lucky enter the stage. Pozzo is now seen to be blind. Lucky is carrying the baggage as before. A rope connects the two

as earlier but it is much shorter now, allowing the blind Pozzo to follow more conveniently. Seeing the two tramps Lucky stops. Pozzo goes on and collides against the stationary Lucky. He asks the carrier what has happened. The impact of the collision makes Lucky fall and Pozzo also comes down with him The two lie helpless among the scattered baggage. This time it is Vladimir who is certain that it is Godot. Pozzo shouts for help. Estragon also says that it is Godot. Vladimir expresses a sense of relief that their day-long waiting has ended satisfactorily. Pozzo continues to shout for help. Suddenly, Vladimir is able to recognise the newcomer as Pozzo. Estragon still goes on saying that he knew it was Godot. He is disillusioned by Vladimir, who tells him that it is Pozzo. Estragon is dejected, but Vladimir cheers him up by saying that perhaps he has another bone for him. Estragon suggests that he should ask him, but Vladimir replies that it would be better to help him on to his feet first. Estragon counters this by saying that they should first ask him ; if he has no bone to give they need not take the trouble of helping him. Vladimir still insists that they should help him first. Estragon cannot understand why Pozzo needs help. The tramps then agree that it would be a good idea to strike a bargain with Pozzo before helping him. Vladimir is afraid that Lucky might get up all of a sudden and put them in difficulty. Estragon proposes that the two of them should give him a good beating first. Vladimir is afraid to do so, for Lucky might not be really asleep as he seems to. They should rather take advantage of Pozzo's calling for help.

The Tramps and Pozzo

Estragon is opposed to the idea of helping Pozzo. Vladimir reminds him that they would be doing so only against some tangible return. It is not often that their help is needed, and seldom that it has a price. It is their good fortune to be there exactly when Pozzo needs help, which any one in their place could have given him. They must avail themselves of the opportunity before it is too late. He remarks that even the wild beast comes to the help of its fellow in trouble and, if he cannot, he just slinks away into the forest. He does not just stand there thinking whether or not he should help. Estragon then asks Pozzo what he would pay them if they help him. Pozzo says one hundred francs. Estragon thinks this insufficient. Pozzo then raises the amount to two hundred. Vladimir says they are coming to help him. He tries to raise Pozzo to his feet but not only fails but falls down himself. He tries to get up but does not succeed. Estragon says he is going. Vladimir pleads with him to stay, otherwise they would kill him. In any case, he asks Estragon to help him to get up and then they will go away together. Estragon wants a promise that they will never come back there. Vladimir gives the promise. After much hesitation Estragon extends his hand to Vladimir. The latter at once grasps it but instead of being able to get up, he also brings Estragon down.

Estragon also is unable to stand on his feet. Pozzo goes on howling for help. His cries get on the nerves of Estragon and Vladimir. Vladimir suggests that they might have a little sleep while they are still down. Estragon goes to sleep but is soon awakened. Vladimir thinks it is Pozzo's cries that have disturbed his sleep. Estragon tells Vladimir to put a stop to Pozzo's crying by kicking him in the crotch. Vladimir does so, and Pozzo crawls away, howling in pain. After a time, Pozzo collapses. They call him but he does not reply. Vladimir thinks he might be dying. Estragon is doubtful whether Pozzo is his real name. He suggests that they should go on calling him by one name after another until he responds. Estragon calls him by the name 'Abel'. Pozzo responds, renewing his appeal for help. Estragon is glad that he has succeeded in his very first attempt. Encouraged by his success, Estragon says that the name of Pozzo's companion might be Cain. He calls out 'Cain', but it is once again Pozzo who responds. Estragon is surprised and says that the man must be all humanity. The two tramps try to get up and are successful in doing so. They are happy that it has been so easy. Vladimir says it is simply a question of will-power. They decide to help Pozzo now, and succeed in raising him to his feet. However, he is unable to keep on standing without their support. The two friends hold him up. Pozzo wants to know who th.y are. He is afraid that they are highwaymen. They assure him that they are friendly towards him. Vladimir asks him whether he does not recognise them. Pozzo says he is blind. Pozzo wants to know the time. Vladimir and Estragon look at the sky. Vladimir says it might be seven o'clock or eight o'clock. Pozzo only wants to be told whether it is evening. Estragon insists that the sun i. rising, while Vladimir says it is setting. Vladimir tells Pozzo that it is evening and that night is drawing near. Vladimir asks Pozzo about his blindness. The latter says that his sight used to be very good once but he became blind all of a sudden one day. Pozzo wants that his servant also should be helped to his feet. Estragon is asked to do so. He is hesitant but is at last prevailed upon to do so, for Pozzo tells him that Lucky never defends himself and Vladimir says that this would be a good opportunity for Estragon to be revenged upon Lucky. As Estragon goes towards Lucky, Vladimir asks him to be sure that Lucky is alive before helping him because there would be no point in his wasting his energy on a dead man. Estragon kicks Lucky furiously but hurts his own foot in the process.

Pozzo's Forgetfulness

Vladimir is greatly puzzled by the situation. He asks Pozzo to confirm that he is indeed Pozzo and his companion is Lucky. Pozzo confirms this. Vladimir mentions that he talked to them on the previous day and his servant danced and 'thought' for their entertainment. Pozzo is unable to recall anything of this but says that Vladimir might think as he pleases. As Pozzo makes ready to go, Vladimir requests that he should ask Lucky to sing, recite or

think for them. Pozzo replies that Lucky is absolutely dumb, he cannot even groan. Vladimir wants to know when that happened. This makes Pozzo furious. Questions about time, he claims, torment him. One day is just like another, so it does not matter when he became blind, or Lucky became dumb. It all happened one day, just as they would all die one day. Uttering some dark words about humanity giving birth astride a grave, and the grave-digger assisting at the birth, Pozzo departs along with Lucky. A noise off-stage tells the tramps that the two have fallen once again.

The Final Phase

Night-fall is now swiftly approaching. The tramps have reached the last phase of their waiting. Vladimir pretends that he knew Pozzo and Lucky but deliberately did not recognise them. They also knew him but they did not recognise him because in their wretched condition nobody recognises the tramps these days. Vladimir suspects that Pozzo was not really blind, that he was able to see them. Estragon wonders whether Pozzo wasn't in reality Godot. Estragon goes to sleep and Vladimir utters a soliloquy. He wonders what he will tell himself about today's happenings tomorrow. He might say that he waited here for Godot till night-fall along with his friend Estragon, but will there be any truth in all this ? Estragon will be unable to corroborate anything, for he is asleep now and would in any case claim that he has forgotten everything. It is possible that Vladimir himself, who thinks he is quite conscious, is as ignorant as Estragon, that some higher intelligence watching him might say that he is asleep, just like Estragon.

The Messenger-Boy Arrives

While Estragon is still asleep, the boy arrives. Vladimir asks him whether he is the same boy who came yesterday but the messenger denies this. Vladimir decides that he must be the brother of whom the boy in the First Act made a mention. Vladimir questions him about his message, and it turns out that the message is the same as before—that Godot cannot come that evening but will surely come tomorrow. Vladimir puts several questions to the boy about Godot. He comes to know that Godot does not do anything and that he has a white beard. Somehow the latter fact makes him greatly frightened. The boy exits running and it is suddenly night, with a pale moon shining in the sky. Estragon wakes up. He does not know anything about the arrival and going away of the messenger until Vladimir tells him. They must go away now, says Vladimir, but they must be back again the next day to wait for Godot.

Conclusion

Estragon is sickened to think that they must again wait for Godot, the next day. He suggests they might drop Godot, but Vladimir

tells him that in that case he would punish them. Estragon thereupon repeats his earlier suggestion that they might hang themselves from the tree. There is nothing to hang themselves with, objects Vladimir. Estragon offers the piece of cord with which he ties his trousers. Vladimir and Estragon test the strength of the cord, which breaks in the process. The tramps decide that they must bring with them a good piece of rope when they come back tomorrow. They will hang themselves with it, says Vladimir, unless Godot comes. If Godot does come, they will be saved. As they make ready to leave. Vladimir reminds Estragon to pull up his trousers. Estragon at first fails to understand but at last pulls up the trousers which fell to his ankles when he removed the cord. Vladimir asks Estragon whether he is ready to go. The latter says he is ready and they must leave. However, as the curtain finally comes down the two ,tramps can be seen still standing there, without having moved an inch.

11

Complete Paraphrase of Waiting for Godot

ACT I

SCENE : *A tree by the side of a country road. The time is ev?ning.*

STAGE DIRECTION : *Estragon, a tramp, is sitting on a raised piece of ground. He is trying to pull off his boot, using both his hands. He is breathing hard because of the effort involved. When he becomes quite worn out he stops pulling ; he resumes the attempt after resting for a little while. Another tramp, Vladimir, enters.*

Estragon. (*Once again giving up the attempt to pull off his boot*) I won't succeed in doing this.

Vladimir. (*Moving towards Estragon with short and heavy steps, his legs wide apart, which suggests that he is weak and tired*) I have started believing in the opinion you have expressed, that we won't succeed. I have tried to hide this fact from me all my life, by trying to persuade myself to be more reasonable and trying in all directions. Thus I always came back to the struggle. (*He seems lost in thinking about how he struggled. Then he turns to his companion.*) So we meet once again.

Estragon. (*Taking him literally*) Do you think I am really there ?

Vladimir. I am glad to see that you have come back. I was afraid that you had gone away permanently.

Estragon. I also thought the same.

Vladimir. We are at last together once again. This occasion calls for a celebration. But how can we do so ? (*He thinks hard.*) Get up so that I may embrace you.

Estragon. (*Showing irritation*) No, not at this time.

Vladimir. (*Offended and speaking without enthusiasm now*) I wonder if I may ask you as to where you spent the night.

Estragon. I spent the night in a ditch.

Vladimir. (*Displaying admiration*) Where is this ditch located ?

Estragon. (*Without pointing in any direction*) The ditch is on that side.

Vladimir. Does it mean they did not beat you last night ?

Estragon. I am surprised that you have to ask. Of course they beat me.

Vladimir. Were they the same people who used to beat you in the past ?

Estragon. You want to know if they were the same people ; I don't know if they were the same.

Vladimir. When I go over the past in my mind, I conclude that without my help you would have been completely lost. (*In a decisive manner*). I am sure that but for me you would have by now been reduced to a little heap of bones.

Estragon. How would that have mattered ?

Vladimir. (*Sadly*) One man cannot bear so much. (*Stops. Becomes cheerful again.*) The other side of it is that it is stupid to lose heart at this stage, after all that you have undergone. That is my advice to you. We should have realized our predicament a long time back, in the nineties.

Estragon. Stop talking rot ; it would be better if you help me in pulling off this damned boot.

Vladimir. (*Paying no attention*) We should have jumped down from the top of the Eiffel Tower, hand in hand. We would have been among the first people to commit suicide in this way. In those days we were quite presentable. It is too late to do that now. we are so unpresentable that they would not even permit us to go up the tower. (*Estragon pulls wildly at his boot.*) What are you doing, Estragon ?

Estragon. I am trying to take off my boot. Did your boot never get stuck ?

Vladimir. I have told you again and again that you must take off your boots every day, but you pay no attention to my words.

Estragon. (*Weakly*) Please help me.

Vladimir. Is the shoe hurting you ?

Estragon. I am surprised that you have to ask that. Of course it hurts me.

Vladimir. (*Becoming angry*) You think you are the only one to suffer. You think I don't matter at all. I would like to know what you would say if you were going through what I am afflicted with.

Estragon. Is it causing pain ?

Vladimir. You want to know if it is causing pain ? I am surprised that you think it necessary to ask that.

Estragon. (*Pointing towards his trousers*) All the same, you should button it up.

Vladimir. (*Bending*) You are right. (*He buttons up the fly of his trousers.*) One must always be careful about the small things of life.

Estragon. You ought to have been prepared for what is happening to you now ; it is because you postpone things till it is almost too late to do anything.

Vladimir. (*Thoughtfully*) Till the last moment...(*He thinks deeply.*) There is a saying that if hope is postponed too long, it makes something sick. Now who said that ?

Estragon. Why don't you help me with the boot ?

Vladimir. Sometimes it seems to me that it is going to happen in any case. At such times I feel extremely strange. (*He removes his hat, looks closely into it, feels inside it with his hand, shakes the hat and then puts it on again.*) I don't know how to express it. I feel relieved but at the same time (*He tries hard to find the right word.*) I also feel immensely frightened. (*Emphatically.*) Yes, I feel terribly frightened. (*He removes his hat and looks inside it, once again.*) It is a funny situation. (*He taps hard on the crown of the hat as though to remove something that has entered it, looks closely inside the hat, and then puts it on.*) There is nothing that I can do about it. (*With an immense effort, Estragon succeeds in taking off his boot. He looks inside the boot, feels inside it with his hands. Then he turns the boot upside down and shakes it, expecting something to fall out of it, but nothing happens. He once again feels inside the boot and then stares into the distance without looking at anything in particular.*) What do you say ?

Estragon. I have no comment to make.

Vladimir. Show me the boot.

Estragon. There is nothing I found in it.

Vladimir. In that case you must now try and put on the boot once again.

Estragon. (*Looking carefully at his foot*) I would like to expose the foot to air for a little while.

Vladimir. You are a typical man, for you hold your boots to blame for the fault of your feet which are diseased. (*He removes his hat again, looks closely inside it, feels inside it, strikes on its top, blows into its hollow part and then replaces it on his head.*) This is becoming terrible. (*There is silence. Vladimir seems to be thinking deeply and Estragon is pulling at his toes.*) Of the two thieves who were to be crucified along with Christ one was saved. (*Stops.*) One out of two means a reasonable chance. (*Pauses again.*) Gogo !

Estragon. What do you say ?

Vladimir. I am wondering whether it would help if we repented.

Estragon. What is there to repent of ?

Vladimir. I don't exactly know...(*He thinks hard.*) There is no need of going into details.

Estragon. Do you mean we should repent of the sin of having been born ?

Vladimir breaks into a delighted laugh but soon overcomes it, his hand is pressed on his pubic region, and his face is twisted with pain.

Vladimir. Now one dare not even laugh any longer.

Estragon. That is a sad disability.

Vladimir. I can at the most smile. (*He suddenly smiles, the smile spreading from one ear to the other. He keeps up this smile and then suddenly brings it to an end.*) Smiling is not the same thing as laughing. There is nothing for us to do. (*Pause.*) Gogo !

Estragon. (*Showing irritation*) What is it this time ?

Vladimir. Did you read the Bible at any time ?

Estragon. The Bible ? (*He tries to recollect*) I must have at least read it cursorily some time.

Vladimir. Do you remember the contents of the Gospels ?

Estragon. Well, I remember having seen the maps of the Holy Land in it. They were coloured maps ; they showed the Dead Sea to be of a pale blue colour, and the very sight of it made me feel

thirsty. I used to say to myself that we would go to the Holy Land for our honeymoon. We will have a swim in the sea. We will be happy there.

Vladimir. You ought to have been a poet.

Estragon. I really was a poet. (*Points towards his torn clothes.*) Is it not obvious from my condition ?

There is silence.

Vladimir. What was I saying...How is your foot now ?

Estragon. It can be seen to be swelling.

Vladimir. Oh, I remember now, I was speaking about the thieves. Do you remember the story about the two thieves ?

Estragon. No, I don't.

Vladimir. Shall I relate that story to you ?

Estragon. No, I don't want you to do so.

Vladimir. It will help to pass the time. (*He pauses.*) There were two thieves who were crucified along with Christ, the Saviour of mankind. One—

Estragon. What was the word you used for Christ ?

Vladimir. The Saviour. There were two thieves. It is supposed that one of them was saved but the other (*searching for the opposite of 'saved'*) was consigned to hell.

Estragon. What was one of them saved from ?

Vladimir. He was saved from damnation.

Estragon. I am leaving now.

He remains where he was.

Vladimir. At the same time...(*Stops.*) I hope I am not boring you, it is inexplicable that out of the four Evangelists who describe the Crucifixion only one speaks of one of the thieves being saved. All the four of them were at the spot, at least quite near it, and only one says that one of the thieves was saved. (*Pause.*) Come along, Gogo, you must keep the conversation going. You should be in a position to do so, once in a while.

Estragon. (*With artificial enthusiasm*) This appears to me to be uncommonly interesting.

Vladimir. Only one out of four said so. Of the remaining three, two do not refer to any thieves at all, and the third writes that both the thieves abused him.

Estragon. Whom did they abuse ?

Vladimir. What are you asking ?

Estragon. What is the whole thing about ? Who abused whom ?

Vladimir. The thieves abused Christ, the Saviour.

Estragon. Why did they do so ?

Vladimir. Because he could not save the thieves.

Estragon. Did they want to be saved from damnation ?

Vladimir. You are being stupid ; they wanted to be saved from death.

Estragon. I think you yourself said that they wanted to escape hell.

Vladimir. No, no, I said death.

Estragon. What does that prove ?

Vladimir. It means that both of them must have been damned.

Estragon. That was quite proper.

Vladimir. But out of the four Evangelists one says that one of the two thieves was saved.

Estragon. It only means that there is a difference of opinion among them. That is the end of the matter.

Vladimir. But all the four Evangelists were there, only one of whom mentions one thief being saved. Why must we believe this one and disbelieve the other three ?

Estragon. Who believes this Evangelist ?

Vladimir. Everyone does so. This is the only account they are familiar with.

Estragon. People are damned ignorant monkeys.

He gets up painfully, and goes to the extreme left of the stage with a limping gait. He stops there and looks fixedly into the distance, screening his eyes with one hand. Then he turns back and goes to the extreme right, and again gazes into the distance. Vladimir watches him, then goes and takes up the boot from the ground. He looks closely into it but drops it hurriedly.

Vladimir. It is unbearable !

He spits in disgust. Estragon moves to the centre of the stage and, with his back towards the auditorium, stops.

Estragon. This is a nice place. (*He turns and advances to the front of the stage.*) The view is inspiring. (*Turning towards Vladimir*) Let us go.

Vladimir. We can't do so.

Estragon. Why can't we ?

Vladimir. Because we have to wait for Godot.

Estragon. (*Dejectedly*) Of course. (*Pause.*) Are you sure this was the place where we were to wait ?

Vladimir. Do you doubt it ?

Estragon. Is this the place, really, where we were to wait ?

Vladimir. He said we were to wait by the side of the tree. (*They look at the tree*). Do you see any other trees in the area ?

Estragon. What tree is this ?

Vladimir. I am not sure : perhaps it is a willow tree.

Estragon. Where are its leaves ?

Vladimir. It must be a dead tree.

Estragon. Then it cannot weep any more.

Vladimir. Or may be it is not the season for it to have leaves.

Estragon. It seems to me to resemble a bush rather than a willow.

Vladimir. It is a shrub.

Estragon. It is a bush.

Vladimir. No, it is... What are you trying to imply ? Do you mean we have come to the wrong place ?

Estragon. If this is the right place he ought to have been here by now.

Vladimir. He did not definitely say that he would come.

Estragon. Supposing he does not come ?

Vladimir. Then we shall come back here tomorrow.

Estragon. And after that to do the same day after tomorrow.

Vladimir. That is quite possible.

Estragon. And like that infinitely.

Vladimir. The real point is—

Estragon. That we must keep on returning here till he comes.

Vladimir. That is a cruel way of putting it.

Estragon. We came here yesterday also.

Vladimir. You are mistaken in saying so.

Estragon. Well, then, tell me what it was that we did yesterday.

Vladimir. You want me to say what we did yesterday ?

Estragon. That is right.

Vladimir. Well...(*Angrily*). When you are near one can never be certain of anything.

Estragon. In my opinion we were here yesterday.

Vladimir. (*Looking round*) Do you recognise the place ?

Estragon. I didn't say I recognised the place.

Vladimir. Then how can you be certain ?

Estragon. The place makes no difference.

Vladimir. All the same, there is that tree...(*Turning towards the auditorium*). There is that marsh.

Estragon. Are you certain we were to wait this evening ?

Vladimir. What do you mean ?

Estragon. Were we to wait this evening ?

Vladimir. Godot had mentioned Saturday. (*Pause.*) I think he said so.

Estragon. You mean you are not certain ?

Vladimir. I must have noted it down somewhere.

He searches in his pockets, which are full of all sort of useless things.

Estragon. (*Trying to make ironical hints*) Which Saturday did he say ? Is it Saturday today ! Is it not Sunday. (*Pause.*) Or Monday. (*Pause.*) It might even be Friday.

Vladimir. (*Looking around him in confusion, as though he could find the date by looking at the landscape*) That is not possible !

Estragon. It might even be Thursday.

Vladimir. What shall we do now ?

Estragon. It is even possible that he came here yesterday when we were not here ; in that case he won't come here again today.

Vladimir. But you have said that we did come here yesterday.

Estragon. I might be mistaken about it. (*Pause.*) Do you mind if we interrupt our conversation for a minute ?

Vladimir. (*Weakly*) All right. (*Estragon sits down on the raised spot. Vladimir moves to and fro in great agitation. From time to time he stops and gazes into the distance. Estragon goes to sleep. Vladimir stops before Estragon.*) Gogo ! ...Gogo ! ...GOGO !

Estragon wakes up with a start.

Estragon. (*Recalling the horror of their situation*) I fell asleep. (*In great dejection*) Why don't you ever let me sleep ?

Vladimir. I was feeling lonely.

Estragon. I had a dream in my sleep.

Vladimir. Don't tell me what it was.

Estragon. I dreamt that—

Vladimir. I am not interested in knowing what it was !

Estragon. (*Pointing as if to the whole universe*) This dream is enough for you ? (*Silence.*) It is not nice of you to refuse to listen to my dream, Didi. If you don't share my private bad dreams, who will ?

Vladimir. I suggest that you let them remain private. You know I can't bear to hear your dreams.

Estragon. (*Without warmth*) There are certain times when I seriously think whether it would not be better for us to part.

Vladimir. If you part from me you would not be able to go very far.

Estragon. It would be too bad if that happens. (*Pause.*) Don't you think, Didi, that it would be too bad ? (*Pause.*) Especially when you think how beautiful the way would be. (*Pause.*) And how good the companions would be. (*Pause. Requesting abjectly.*) Didi, don't you think that would be too bad ?

Vladimir. Don't get agitated.

Estragon. (*In a sensuous manner*) Calm...calm. The English pronounce the word as 'cawm'. (*Pause.*) Do you know the story of the Englishman who went to the house of ill-fame ?

Vladimir. Yes, I know it.

Estragon. Then tell it to me.

Vladimir. No more of it !

Estragon. There was an Englishman who took a little more drink than he usually did. The procurer asked him if he wanted a fair-coloured woman, a dark-complexioned one or a red-haired one. Now you can carry on the story from there.

Vladimir. Stop it, I say.

Vladimir goes away in a hurry. Estragon gets up and follows him to the end of the stage. Estragon makes gestures as though he is encouraging someone who is having a fist-fight. Vladimir enters. He passes by the side of Estragon, and crosses the stage, his head bowed. Estragon takes one step in his direction but stops.

Estragon. (*Gently*) You desired to speak to me ? (*Silence. Estragon takes one more step forward.*) There was something you wanted to say to me ? (*Silence. He takes another step forward.*) Didi...

Vladimir. (*Without turning*) No, there is nothing I have to say to you.

Estragon. (*Stepping forward*) You are angry with me ? (*Silence. Stepping forward.*) Please forgive me. (*Silence. Stepping further towards him. Estragon puts his hand on Vladimir's shoulder.*) Please come round, Didi. (*Silence.*) Let me shake you by the hand. (*Vladimir half turns towards him.*) Let us embrace. (*Vladimir reacts unfavourably to this.*) Don't be

obstinate. (*Vladimir softens. They embrace. Estragon draws back in disgust.*) You smell cf garlic !

Vladimir. I take garlic for the sake of my kidneys. (*Silence. Estragon looks attentively at the tree*). What are we to do now ?

Estragon. We must wait.

Vladimir. That is true, but what are we to do while we wait ?

Estragon. What is your view about my suggestion that we should hang ourselves ?

Vladimir. This mode of suicide will give us sexual pleasure by causing an erection.

Estragon. (*Becoming very excited*) Will it really cause an erection ?

Vladimir. Not only that but also everything which follows an erection. Where the fluid falls mandrakes grow. That is the reason why mandrakes shriek when you pull them up. Was this known to you ?

Estragon. Let us at once hang ourselves.

Vladimir From a branch of this tree ? (*They move towards the tree.*) I don't think this tree is dependable.

Estragon. There is no harm in trying.

Vladimir. Then do that.

Estragon. I will follow you.

Vladimir. No, you must be the first.

Estragon. Why should it be I ?

Vladimir. Because you are lighter than I am.

Estragon. Just because of that ?

Vladimir. I don't follow you.

Estragon. Use your intelligence, can't you do that ?

Vladimir uses his intelligence.

Vladimir. (*At last*) I am still in the dark.

Estragon. It is like this. (*He thinks.*) The bough...the bough ...(*Angrily.*) Can't you use your intelligence ?

Vladimir. I am entirely depending on you.

Estragon. Since I am light, the bough will not break when I hang from it. Soon I shall be dead. After that you will try to hang yourself, but since you are heavy, the bough might break. Then you will be left alone. On the other hand, if you were to be the first—

Vladimir. That did not occur to me.

Estragon. If it can support the weight of your body, it will support anyone.

Vladimir. But am I really heavier than you ?

Estragon. You yourself have told me that. I am not sure myself. There are at least equal chances of your being heavier.

Vladimir. Well, what are we to do now ?

Estragon. Let us not do anything at all. It is safer that way.

Vladimir. Yes, let us wait and see what he has to say.

Estragon. Whom do you mean ?

Vladimir. I mean Godot.

Estragon. That is a good idea.

Vladimir. We should wait till we know what our position now is.

Estragon. On the other side the argument is that we should strike the iron before it gets absolutely cold.

Vladimir. I have a curiosity to know what he will offer us. Then we can think whether to accept it or reject it.

Estragon. What, to be exact, was it that we asked him to do for us ?

Vladimir. Were you not there when we talked ?

Estragon. Perhaps I was not very attentive.

Vladimir. Oh...it was nothing very definite that we asked him to do.

Estragon. We made a kind of prayer to him, didn't we ?

Vladimir. That is exactly what we did.

Estragon. It was a kind of vague request.

Vladimir. That is what it was.

Estragon. What was his reply ?

Vladimir. He said he would see.

Estragon. He said he could not make any promise.

Vladimir. He said he would have to think carefully.

Estragon. In a quiet atmosphere at home.

Vladimir. He would have to consult his family.

Estragon. Also his friends.

Vladimir. He has also to consult his agents.

Estragon. He must consult his correspondents.

Vladimir. He must refer to his ledgers.

Estragon. He has also to see his bank account.

Vladimir. He must do all this before he can take a decision.

Estragon. This is the normal way of doing such things.

Vladimir. Don't you think it is ?

Estragon. Of course, I do.

Vladimir. That is my belief also.

Silence.

Estragon. (*Showing anxiety*) How about us ?

Vladimir. I am sorry I couldn't hear you ?

Estragon. I said, what about us ?

Vladimir. I still don't get you.

Estragon. What is our position with respect to Godot ?

Vladimir. Where do we come in, you mean ?

Estragon. There is no hurry to understand.

Vladimir. We have to crawl before Godot.

Estragon. Oh, is our position as bad as that ?

Vladimir. Do you mean you would like to use your rights ?

Estragon. Do you mean we no longer have any rights ?

Vladimir laughs, but as before he has to suppress the laughter and only a smile remains.

Vladimir. Your attitude is laughable ; I don't laugh only because I am not permitted to.

Estragon. Have we lost our rights ?

Vladimir. (*Clearly*) We escaped them.

Silence. They don't move, their arms hanging by their sides, their heads bent low, and their knees bent inwards.

Estragon. (*Weakly*) I hope we are not tired. (*Pause.*) I hope—

Vladimir. Pay attention !

They listen, assuming a rigid attitude which looks abnormal.

Estragon. I am not able to hear anything.

Vladimir. Silence ! (*They listen. Estragon loses his balance and just escapes falling. He catches hold of the arm af Vladimir who staggers. Thus drawn closely together, they listen.*) I can't hear anything either.

They heave sighs of relief. They are no longer tense and draw away from each other.

Estragon. You made me frightened.

Vladimir. I thought he had come.

Estragon. Who do you mean ?

Vladimir. I mean Godot.

Estragon. It was only the wind blowing through the reeds.

Vladimir. I am almost certain I heard shouts.

Estragon. There is no reason why Godot should shout !

Vladimir. He could shout at his horse.

Silence.

Estragon. (*With violence*) I am feeling hungry.

Vladimir. Would you like to eat a carrot ?

Estragon. Don't you have anything else ?

Vladimir. Perhaps I have also some turnips.

Estragon. In that case give me a carrot. (*Vladimir searches in his pockets, takes out a turnip and hands it to Estragon who has one bite at it and says angrily.*) You've given me a turnip !

Vladimir. I'm sorry. I was sure it was a carrot I was giving you. (*He again searches through his pockets, but cannot find anything except turnips.*) They are all turnips. (*Searches again.*) Perhaps you have eaten the last carrot. (*Searching once again.*) Wait, I have got a carrot. (*He brings out a carrot and hands it over to Estragon.*) Here it is, my dear fellow. (*Estragon wipes the carrot on his sleeve and begins eating it.*) Give the turnip back to me. (*Estragon returns the turnip and Vladimir puts it in his pocket.*) Don't consume it too soon, this is the last carrot.

Estragon. (*Chewing the carrot*) I had put a question to you.

Vladimir. Oh, did you ?

Estragon. Did you reply to my question ?

Vladimir. How do you like the carrot ?

Estragon. It is just a carrot.

Vladimir. That is all the better. (*Pause.*) What was your question ?

Est agon. I no longer remember. (*Chewing.*) My forgetfulness irritates me. (*He looks at the carrot with appreciation, manipulates it between his finger and thumb.*) I will never forget this carrot. (*He sucks the end of the carrot in a thoughtful mood.*) Oh, yes, I now remember what I wanted to ask you.

Vladimir. What was it ?

Estragon (*His mouth is full of the carrot. He speaks in an empty sort of way.*) We are not tied! That is what I wanted to say.

Vladimir. I can't hear even a word of what you are saying.

Estragon. (*Chews and swallows*) I want you to tell me if we are tied.

Vladimir. Tied? What does that mean?

Estragon. Yes, I said 'tied'.

Vladimir. What do you mean by this?

Estragon. I mean that we are not tied down.

Vladimir. Tied down to whom and by whom?

Estragon. To the man you have in mind.

Vladimir. Do you mean Godot? Why should we be tied down to him? That is a funny idea. There is no question of it. (*Pause.*) At least right now.

Estragon. You are sure his name is Godot?

Vladimir. I think that is his name.

Estragon. Imagine that! (*He raises the remainder of the carrot by the remnant of its leaf, and moves it in front of his eyes.*) It is a funny thing, the more you eat of the carrot, the worse it begins to taste.

Vladimir. In my case just the opposite thing happens.

Estragon. That is to say?

Vladimir. I get used to the tasteless food as I go on eating it.

Estragon. (*After thinking for a long time*) Do you think that is the opposite of what happens to me?

Vladimir. It is a question of one's bent of mind.

Estragon. It is really a question of one's character.

Vladimir. One can't help it.

Estragon. It is no use trying to struggle against it.

Vladimir. One's nature and character are fixed.

Estragon. You cannot escape from yourself.

Vladimir. Because basic facts do not change.

Estragon. We can do nothing about it. (*He offers the remnant of the carrot to Vladimir.*) Would you like to eat the last part ?

A terrible cry is heard very near them. The carrot falls out of Estragon's hand. They remain stationary, then both of them rush towards the sides of the stage. Estragon returns from half way, and, running back, picks up the carrot and puts it in his pocket. Then he runs back to Vladimir who is waiting for him. He runs back once again, picks up his boot and again joins Vladimir. They sit crouched together, their shoulders bent low, trying to hide away from the danger which they expect to be approaching them.

Pozzo and Lucky enter. There is a rope fixed round Lucky's neck ; it is by this rope that Pozzo drives Lucky. Because of this it is Lucky who appears first, then the rope becomes visible. This is long enough to enable Lucky to reach the middle of the stage. It is then that Pozzo appears. Lucky is carrying a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat. Pozzo is carrying a whip.

Pozzo. (*Offstage*) Move on ! (*Sound of the whip being cracked. Pozzo appears. The two cross the stage. Lucky passes before the two tramps and then leaves the stage. Pozzo notices Estragon and Vladimir and stops suddenly. The rope becomes tightened because of this. Pozzo gives it a violent jerk.*) Move back !

There is a noise which suggests that Lucky has come down with all his burdens. Vladimir and Estragon run towards him. They want to go to his help but are also afraid of doing so. Vladimir takes a step towards Lucky but Estragon restrains him by holding his sleeve.

Vladimir. Let me go !

Estragon. Remain where you are ; don't go :

Pozzo. Be cautious. He is a wicked creature. (*Vladimir and Estragon turn towards Pozzo.*) He is especially bad to strangers.

Estragon. (*In a low voice* Is it he ?

Vladimir. Who do you mean ?

Estragon. (*Unable to recall the name*) I mean...

Vladimir. Do you mean Godot ?

Estragon. Yes, I mean him.

Pozzo. Let me introduce myself. I am Pozzo.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) No, he is not Godot !

Estragon. But he said his name was Godot.

Vladimir. No, he did not !

Estragon. (*Timidly to Pozzo*) Sir, are you not Mr. Godot ?

Pozzo. (*In a terrifying voice*) No, I am Pozzo ! (*Silence.*) Pozzo ! (*Silence.*) Doesn't that name tell you who I am ? (*Silence.*) I say have you not heard this name before ?

Vladimir and Estragon look at each other in a questioning manner.

Estragon. (*Pretending to recollect*) Bozzo...Bozzo.

Vladimir. (*Doing the same*) Pozzo...Pozzo

Pozzo. P-p-po-z-z-zo !

Estragon. Oh, Pozzo...let me remember...Pozzo...

Vladimir. Is the name Pozzo or Bozzo ?

Estragon. Pozzo...no...I am afraid I cannot remember any such name.

Pozzo advances towards them in a threatening manner.

Vladimir. (*Trying to appease him*) I once knew a family called Gozzo. The mother was suffering from venereal disease.

Estragon. (*Hastily*) We do not belong to this region, sir.

Pozzo. (*Halting*) All the same, you are human beings. (*Putting on his spectacles.*) At least in appearance. (*Removing his glasses.*) You belong to the same species as I do. (*Laughs loudly.*) You are also made in the image of God !

Vladimir. Well, it is like this—

Pozzo. (*Authoritatively*) Who is this Godot ?

Estragon. Godot ?

Pozzo. You thought I was Godot.

Estragon. No, sir, I did not do so even for a moment.

Pozzo. Who is Godot ?

Vladimir. Oh, he...is a sort of acquaintance of ours.

Estragon. Not even an acquaintance, for we hardly know him.

Vladimir. It is true that we do not know him very well, but all the same we can call him an acquaintance.

Estragon. So far as I am concerned, I would not even be able to recognise him if I saw him.

Pozzo. You thought I was Godot.

Estragon. (*Drawing back from Pozzo*) The fact is that, you know, it is dark, and we have been under the strain of waiting for a long time. I admit that for a moment I did think that you were Godot.

Pozzo. Waiting ? You are waiting for Godot.

Vladimir. Well you see—

Pozzo. You have been waiting on my land.

Vladimir. Our intentions were perfectly harmless.

Estragon. Yes, we meant no ill.

Pozzo. Anyway, the road belongs to everybody.

Vladimir. Yes, that is what we thought.

Pozzo. It is shameful. But you are here, it can't be helped.

Estragon. Yes, nothing can be done about it now.

Pozzo. (*Making a generous gesture*) Well, forget it (*Giving a jerk to the rope.*) Stand up, pig ! (*Pause.*) Whenever he falls down he goes to sleep. (*Jerks the rope again.*) Stand up, hog ! (*Noise, suggesting that Lucky has got up and is picking up his baggage. Pozzo gives a jerk to the rope.*) Get back ! (*Lucky enters, moving backwards.*) Stop, now ! (*Lucky stops.*) Turn ! (*Lucky turns. Pozzo speaks in a friendly way to Vladimir and Estragon.*) I am glad to have met you, gentlemen. (*They seem unable to believe their ears.*) Yes, I am really happy. (*Jerks the rope again.*) Come nearer ! (*Lucky comes nearer.*) Stop ! (*Lucky stops.*) Without a companion the road seems very long when a person has to travel for (*after consulting his watch and calculating*) six hours at a stretch and not see a single human

being. (*To Lucky.*) Give me my coat. (*Lucky places the bag on the ground, comes nearer and gives him the coat, then goes back and resumes his burden.*) Hold that! (*Pozzo extends the whip. Since Lucky has both his hands busy, he holds the whip between his teeth and returns to his place. Pozzo begins to put on his coat but stops.*) Coat! (*Lucky again puts down the bag, basket and stool, advances and helps Pozzo in putting on his coat. He then returns to his place and takes up the burdens as before*). There is a feeling of the autumn in the air this evening. (*Pozzo finishes buttoning his coat, bends down, looks at himself and then straightens up.*) Whip! (*Lucky advances and bends down. Pozzo pulls the whip out of his mouth. Lucky returns to his place*). Gentlemen, it is true that I cannot go on for a long time without the company of my likes. (*Putting on his glasses he again looks at his fellow human beings.*) Even when they are people like you who resemble me imperfectly. (*He removes his glasses.*) Stool! (*Lucky puts down the bag and basket and, advancing, puts the stool down after opening it. Then he returns to his place and resumes the rest of his burden.*) Move it closer to me. (*Lucky puts down the bag and the basket, advances, moves the stool closer to Pozzo, then, returning to his place, takes up the bag and the basket. Pozzo sits down, places the end of his whip against Lucky's chest and pushes.*) Get back! (*Lucky takes a step back.*) Further back! (*Lucky takes one more step back.*). Stop! (*Lucky stops. To Vladimir and Estragon.*) That is why, if you permit me, I will play with you a moment, before I proceed further. Basket! (*Lucky advances, gives him the basket and then goes back to his place.*) This fresh air sharpens the dulled appetite. (*He opens the basket and takes out of it a piece of chicken and a bottle of wine*). Basket! (*Lucky advances, picks up the basket and goes to his place.*) Further! (*Lucky steps back further.*) He smells badly. Here's to happy days!

He drinks from the bottle, puts the bottle down and begins to eat. There is silence. Vladimir and Estragon, cautiously at first, but then less fearfully, begin to move about Lucky, looking at him up and down. Pozzo eats the chicken very hungrily, and throws away the bones after having sucked them. Lucky bends slowly, till the bag and basket touch the ground. He straightens up all of a sudden but begins to bend once again. This is repeated rhythmically. Lucky seems to be asleep although he is still on his feet.

Estragon. What is wrong with him?

Vladimir. He seems to be tired.

Estragon. Why does he not place his bags on the ground?

Vladimir. I do not know. (*They come very near him.*) Be careful.

Estragon. Let us say something to him.

Vladimir. Look at him !

Estragon. What ?

Vladimir. (*Pointing*) Look at his neck !

Estragon. (*Looking at his neck*) I can't see anything.

Vladimir. See from where I am standing.

Estragon goes and stands by the side of Vladimir.

Estragon. Oh, how bad !

Vladimir. It is a sore with a fluid coming out of it.

Estragon. It is because of the rope.

Vladimir. Yes, because of the rubbing of the rope.

Estragon. That is unavoidable.

Vladimir. It is because of the friction of the knot.

Estragon. It is because of the irritation.

They resume their inspection, focussing their attention on Lucky's face.

Vladimir. (*Against his will*) He is rather good-looking.

Estragon. (*Shrugging his shoulders, and making his face crooked*) Do you really think so ?

Vladimir. However, he looks a bit womanish.

Estragon. Saliva is dripping out of his mouth.

Vladimir. Under the circumstances, that is inevitable.

Estragon. There is the spittle falling from his mouth.

Vladimir. Perhaps he is mentally underdeveloped.

Estragon. He may be suffering from cretinism.

Vladimir. (*Having a closer look at Lucky*) To me he seems to have an enlarged thyroid gland.

Estragon. (*Looking closer as his friend has done*) I am not sure of that.

Vladimir. He is short of breath.

Estragon. He could hardly help that.

Vladimir. Look at his eyes !

Estragon. What is so special about them ?

Vladimir. They seem to be popping out of his head.

Estragon. He seems to me to be on his last breath.

Vladimir. I am not sure of that. (*After a pause.*) Let us ask him a question.

Estragon. Do you think it would be a good thing to ask him a question ?

Vladimir. We lose nothing by doing so.

Estragon. (*Timidly*) Mister......

Vladimir. Speak louder.

Estragon. (*Louder*) Mister...

Pozzo. Don't disturb him. (*They turn in the direction of Pozzo. Pozzo has by now finished eating and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.*) You can easily see that he wants to rest. Basket ! (*He strikes a match and begins to light his pipe with it. Estragon sees the chicken bones on the ground and looks at them fixedly and with greed. Since Lucky has not moved, Pozzo throws away the match in anger and gives a jerk to the rope.*) Basket ! (*Lucky moves suddenly and almost falls down. Then he recovers his wits, advances towards his master, puts the bottle of wine back in the basket and returns to his place. Estragon once again stares at bones. Striking another match, Pozzo lights his pipe.*) You must not be surprised ; it is really not his job. (*He draws a deep breath on the pipe and stretches out his legs.*) Well, I feel better now !

Estragon. (*Timidly*) Please, sir...

Pozzo. Well, my good man, what is it that you want ?

Estragon. I think you have finished your meal and have no use for the chicken bones now.

Vladimir. (*Feeling ashamed*). You ought to have waited !

Pozzo. No need for that. He has done well by asking right now. You want to know whether I need the bones ? (*Turning them over with the end of his whip.*) No, I do not need them any longer for myself. (*Estragon moves one step in the direction of the bones.*) But... (*Estragon stops.*) Theoretically the bones are Lucky's share. So it is he whom we must ask. (*Estragon turns towards Lucky but hesitates to ask him.*) Go on, ask him without fear ; he'll tell you whether he wants them or not.

Estragon goes towards Lucky but stops just in front of him.

Estragon. Mister...Excuse me, Mister...

Pozzo. He is speaking to you, pig ! You must reply. (*To Estragon.*) Ask him again.

Estragon. Excuse me, Mister, do you want to have those bones ?

Lucky gives Estragon a long look.

Pozzo. (*Greatly overjoyed*) You have called him Mister ! (*Lucky bends his head down.*) Answer ! Do you or do you not want the bones ? (*Lucky remains silent. To, Estragon.*) They belong to you. (*Estragon rushes to the bones and picking them up, begins to gnaw them.*) I don't like it ; this is the first time that he refused to have a bone. (*Looking anxiously at Lucky.*) It will be a bad thing if he falls ill while he is still with me.

Smokes his pipe.

Vladimir. (*Speaking suddenly and aloud*) It is shameful !

Silence. Estragon is comrletely puzzled and stops chewing the bone. He alternately looks at Pozzo and Vladimir. In appearance, Pozzo is still calm. Vladimir himself looks embarrassed.

Pozzo. (*To Vladimir*) Is there anything special to which you are referring ?

Vladimir. (*Determined but speaking with a stutter*) It is shameful to treat a man (*pointing towards Lucky*) in this way. He is after all a human being. It is wrong and scandalous to give him such a treatment.

Estragon. (*Not wanting to be excelled by his friend*) I think such a behaviour is disgraceful.

Begins gnawing the bones again.

Pozzo. You are being too hard. (*To Vladimir.*) How old are you, if you don't think it is rude of me to ask such a question ?

(*Silence.*) Are you sixty ? Or seventy ? (*To Estragon.*) What do you think to be his age ?

Estragon. Eleven.

Pozzo. It was rude of me to have asked. (*He knocks up his pipe against his whip and then gets up.*) It is time for me to move on. I am thankful for your company. (*Reflectively.*) Or perhaps I might smoke one more pipe before going away. What is your opinion ? (*They say nothing.*) I am not really a heavy smoker at all. I am not in the habit of smoking two pipes in quick succession, it makes (*making a sign towards his heart*) my heart palpitate. (*Silence.*) That is because of the nicotine in the tobacco. One always absorbs some of it, in spite of the precautions one may take. (*Heaves a sigh.*) You know how it happens. (*Silence.*) Or may be you don't smoke. You do ? You don't ? Well, it does not matter really. (*Silence.*) But the question is that after having got up once, how can I now sit down again so that it does not look affected ? It would seem as though I am infirm. (*To Vladimir.*) Did you say something ? (*Silence.*) Or is it that you didn't speak ? (*Silence.*) It is of no importance in either case. Let me see.

He thinks hard.

Estragon. Ah, it would be better to do that.

He puts the chicken bones in his pocket.

Vladimir. Let us move away.

Estragon. Shall we go away so soon ?

Pozzo. Wait a minute. (*Jerking the rope.*) Stool ! (*He points with his whip. Lucky takes the stool away.*) Further ! Yes, that is right. (*Pozzo sits down. Lucky goes back to his place.*) I have done it.

He fills his pipe.

Vladimir. (*Forcefully*) Let us go !

Pozzo. I hope you are not going away because of me. You won't be sorry if you wait a little longer.

Estragon. (*Expecting that he will give them something*) We have all the time.

Pozzo. (*He has lighted his pipe by now*) The second pipe is never so enjoyable as the first. (*He takes the pipe out of his mouth and looks at it thoughtfully.*) All the same (*putting the pipe back in his mouth*) it does give enjoyment.

Vladimir. In any case I am going.

Pozzo. He can no longer bear my company. It is possible that I am not very kind, but does that matter? (*To Vladimir.*) You must think carefully before doing anything desperate. If you go away while it is still day—for without doubt it is still day—(*They all look up at the sky.*) That is good! (*They stop looking at the sky.*) You must think what would happen in that case. (*Taking the pipe out of his mouth and examining it.*) Think what would become, in that case (*puffing on the pipe*) of your appointment with that person, Godet...Godot...Godin...what is his name? In any case you know the person I mean. That man has your future in his hands... (*Pause.*) at least your immediate future rests on him.

Vladimir. Who told you so?

Pozzo. That man has again spoken to me! If this conversation lasts long enough we shall soon be like old friends.

Estragon. Why doesn't Lucky put down his bags?

Pozzo. I also would be happy to meet the stranger. My happiness increases if I meet more people. Even a meeting with the meanest creature on earth makes one wiser, richer and more conscious of one's blessings. It is possible that even you (*He looks showily at them, making it clear that he is including both of them in his argument.*) would have added to my store of knowledge.

Estragon. Why doesn't Lucky put down his bags?

Pozzo. It would surprise me if he put down his bags.

Vladimir. A question has been put to you.

Pozzo. (*Delighted*) A question! Who is putting it? What is the question? Only a little while ago you were addressing me as 'sir', and were trembling with fear. Now you are putting questions to me. This will not have a good ending!

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) I think he is listening.

Estragon. (*Moving around Lucky*) What did you say?

Vladimir. You can put your question now. He looks quite wide awake now.

Estragon. What should I ask him?

Vladimir. As to why he doesn't put down his bags.

Estragon. I wonder whether he would answer.

Vladimir. You can at least ask him.

Pozzo. (*Who has followed this conversation with attention and anxiety, afraid lest they should forget the question*) Your question is why he does not put down what you call his 'bags' ?

Vladimir. Yes, that is our question.

Pozzo. (*To Estragon*) Are you sure you agree with your friend ?

Estragon. He is breathing as loudly as a grampus.

Pozzo. Well, this is the answer to your question. (*To Estragon.*) But please don't move, it makes me nervous.

Vladimir. Hear.

Estragon. What do you mean ?

Vladimir. He is going to speak.

Estragon goes to Vladimir's side. They both wait, side by side, motionless and silent.

Pozzo. That is good ! Are you all ready to listen ? Are you all looking at me ? (*He looks at Lucky and jerks the rope. Lucky raises his head.*) You must also look at me, you pig ! (*Lucky looks at him.*) That is good. (*He puts his pipe in his pocket, takes out a small vaporizer and sprays his throat with it. After that he replaces the vaporizer in his pocket, clears his throat, spits, repeats the entire action with the vaporizer and spits and replaces the vaporizer once again.*) I am ready to speak now. Are you all attending to me ? Are you all ready ? (*He looks at each one of them in turn and then jerks the rope.*) Hog ! (*Lucky raises his head.*) I don't like speaking to emptiness. That is good. Let me see what I wanted to say.

He thinks.

Estragon. I am going.

Pozzo. What exactly was your question ?

Vladimir. Well, his question was—

Pozzo. (*Angrily*) You must not interrupt me. (*Pause. He is calm once again.*) It would serve no purpose if we were all to speak at the same time. (*Pause.*) What was I saying ? (*Another pause. Speaks more loudly now.*) What was I saying ?

Vladimir imitates the action of one carrying a heavy burden. Pozzo looks at him in bewilderment.

Estragon. (*Emphatically*) Bags. (*He points at Lucky.*) Why does he always hold them ? (*He imitates a person bending under a weight and breathing quickly.*) Why doesn't he ever put them down ? (*He opens his hands, imitating someone who has been relieved of his burden and stands up comfortably.*) Why doesn't Lucky also do so ?

Pozzo. Ah ! You should have mentioned this before. Let me make this absolutely clear. Does he not have the right to put down his bags ? He certainly has the right. From this we conclude that he keeps on carrying the bags all the time because he likes to do so. That is a good explanation. Why does he not want to put down the burden ? (*Pause.*) Well, gentlemen, this is the answer to it.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) Note carefully what he says.

Pozzo. He wants to impress me, so that I may keep him in my service.

Estragon. What did you say ?

Pozzo. Perhaps I have not been able to make it quite clear. He wants to soften me ; in the hope that I won't get rid of him. Even that is not the precise position.

Vladimir. Do you want to get rid of him ?

Pozzo. He wants to befool me, but he won't succeed.

Vladimir. Do you desire to get rid of Lucky ?

Pozzo. He seems to think that when I see how well he performs his job as a carrier, I shall agree to keep him.

Estragon. Are you tired of him ?

Pozzo. He carries things like a pig. He doesn't really know the job.

Vladimir. You want to dispose of him ?

Pozzo. He seems to imagine that when he sees that he does not get tired of carrying, I shall be impressed and be sorry to part with him. Such is his wretched plan. He seems to think that I am short of slaves ! (*All three of them look at Lucky.*) As though he is Atlas, son of Jupiter ! (*Silence.*) Well, that's what I think ! Is there anything else you want to know ?

Uses his vaporizer.

Vladimir. Do you want to get rid of Lucky ?

Pozzo. You must remember that our positions might easily have been reversed, I might have been the carrier and he the master. It is only chance which willed things this way. Each person gets what he deserves.

Vladimir. (*Indistinctly*) Do you want to get rid of him ?

Pozzo. What did you say ?

Vladimir. Do you want to get rid of Lucky ?

Pozzo. I do want this. I ought to have just kicked him out or sent him away at once, but I am so kind-hearted that instead of doing so I am ttaking him away to a fair, where I hope to sell him for a good price. The fact is that it is impossible to drive away such creatures. The best thing would be to kill them.

Lucky weeps.

Estragon. Lucky has started crying.

Pozzo. Even an old dog would show greater dignity. (*He extends his handkerchief towards Estragon.*) Give him comfort, since his condition arouses pity in you. (*Estragon is hesitant.*) Come on. (*Estragon takes the handkerchief.*) Wipe away Lucky's tears, then he will feel less lonely.

Estragon still hesitates.

Vladimir. Give it to me, I will do it.

Estragon refuses to give him the handkerchief. They make gestures at each other like children.

Pozzo. Be quick, otherwise he might stop crying. (*Estragon goes towards Lucky and attempts to wipe his eyes. Lucky gives him a violent kick in the shins. The handkerchief falls out of hand. He draws back from Lucky, walking unsteadily on the stage, crying in pain.*)

Handkerchief !

Lucky puts the bag and basket down on the ground. He picks up the handkerchief, gives it to Pozzo, returns to his place and picks up and holds the basket and bag.

Estragon. Oh, the pig ! (*He pulls up the leg of his trousers.*) He has made me a cripple !

Pozzo. I had told you that he dislikes strangers.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) Show me where he has hurt you. (*Estragon shows his leg. To Pozzo, angrily.*) He is bleeding !

Pozzo. That is a good sign.

Estragon. (*Moving on one leg*) I'll never be able to walk again.

Vladimir. (*Affectionately*) In that case, I'll carry you. (*Pause.*) That is, if it becomes necessary.

Pozzo. He has discontinued crying. (*To Estragon.*) In fact now you are crying in his place. (*Poetically.*) The sum total of tears in the world remains constant. Whenever someone begins crying, somewhere else another person stops crying. The same is true about laughing also. (*He Laughs.*) Let us not talk against our own generation ; it is in no way more unhappy than the previous generations. (*Pause.*) That does not mean that we should speak well of it. (*Pause.*) Let us rather not speak about it at all. (*Pauses in a judicious manner*) It is a fact that the population has increased.

Vladimir. You must try to walk.

Estragon walks a few steps with a limp. He stops in front of Lucky and spits at him. Then he goes back and sits on the mound.

Pozzo. Can you guess who taught me all these beautiful things ? (*Pause. Then he points to Lucky.*) It was my Lucky who taught me all this !

Vladimir. (*Looking at the sky*) Will night never come ?

Pozzo. If lucky had not taught me, my thoughts and feelings would have been only about common things. (*Pause. With intense force.*) I was occupied in professional worries ! (*Becoming calmer.*) Beauty, grace, deepest truth, all these things were outside my reach. Therefore I took a knook (retirement).

Vladimir. (*Suddenly distracted from his inspection of the sky*) Did you say a 'knook' ?

Pozzo. That happened nearly sixty years ago...(*He consults his watch.*) Yes, it was nearly sixty years. (*Standing erect proudly.*) My appearance wouldn't make you think I am so old, would it ? Compared with Lucky, I almost look young, isn't that so ? (*Pause.*) Hat ! (*Lucky puts down the basket and takes off his hat. His long white hair falls about his face. He places his hat under his arm and picks up the basket again.*) You can look at my head. (*Pozzo takes off his hat. He is seen to be completely bald. He puts on his hat again.*) Did you notice ?

Vladimir. And now you are turning away such an old and faithful servant like him ?

Estragon. He is a pig !

Pozzo seems more and more disturbed in mind.

Vladimir. After eating away all the goodness in him, you just throw him away like a... banana skin. Really, it is too bad.

Pozzo. (*Crying as if in pain and holding his head tightly*) I an no longer bear it ! He goes on in such a way ! You can have no idea of it. It is really terrible ! (*He waves his arms.*) It is riving me mad. (*He drops down, his head clutched in his arms.*) can't endure it any longer !

Silence. They all look at Pozzo.

Vladimir. He says he can't bear it.

Estragon. Can't bear it any longer, he says.

Vladimir. He says he is going mad.

Estragon. It is terrible.

Vladimir. (*To Lucky*) How dare you do all this ? It is hateful ! He is such a good master ! How can you torture him like that ? And after having served him for so many years ? It is impossible to believe all this.

Pozzo. (*Sobbing*) Lucky used to be so kind and helpful to me. He used to entertain me...He used to be like my good angel. And now he is driving me to my death.

Estragon. (*To Vladimir*) Does Pozzo want to replace him ?

Vladimir. What do you mean ?

Estragon. Does he want to employ someone else in his place ?

Vladimir. I don't think he wants that.

Estragon. What ?

Vladimir. Well, I don't really know.

Estragon. You can ask him.

Pozzo. (*Has become calmer now*) Gentlemen, I don't know what overpowered me. You must excuse me and forget all that I said. (*Becoming more and more like his real self.*) I don't really remember what I said, but you can be certain there was not a grain of truth in all that I said. (*Drawing himself up and tapping his chest.*) I am sure I don't look like a man who can be made to suffer by a person like Lucky. Tell me frankly. (*He searches through his pockets.*) Where have I placed my pipe ?

Vladimir. We are having a nice evening.

Estragon. I will never forget it.

Vladimir. And it still remains unfinished.

Estragon. Apparently, there is still more of it.

Vladimir. In fact it has just really started.

Estragon. It is terrible.

Vladimir. It is worse than a dumb-show.

Estragon. It is like the circus.

Vladimir. It resembles a show in a music-hall.

Estragon. No, it is more like a circus.

Pozzo. What did I do with my pipe ?

Estragon. This is quite funny. He has lost his pipe !

Laughs loudly.

Vladimir. I'll be back soon.

Goes hurriedly towards the wings.

Estragon. It (*the lavatory*) is towards the end of the corridor, on the left side.

Vladimir. Keep my seat for me till I come.

Exit Vladimir.

Pozzo. I have lost my pipe manufactured by Krapp and Peterson.

Estragon. (*Going into convulsions with laughter*) He will make me die of laughter !

Pozzo. (*Looking up*) Did you by any chance see my pipe ? (*He notices that Vladimir is not there.*) Oh, he has gone already ! He did not even say good-bye to me. How could he do that ? He could surely have waited a little !

Estragon. If he had waited longer he would burst.

Pozzo. Oh, that was the reason of his going away ? (*Pause.*) Of course, in that case I can have no complaint.

Estragon. Come here.

Pozzo. Why do you want me ?

Estragon. You'll know when you come here.

Pozzo. Do you really want that I should get up ?

Estragon. Be quick. (*Pozzo gets up and goes to Estragon. Estragon points in the distance.*) Look there !

Pozzo. (*After putting on his glasses*) Oh, it is very strange.

Estragon. But it is all over now.

Enter Vladimir, looking gloomy. He pushes Lucky out of his way with his shoulder, kicks over the stool and moves about in agitation.

Pozzo. He does not seem to be happy.

Estragon. (*To Vladimir*) You missed a fine sight. It is a pity.

Vladimir stops, puts the stool right and comes and goes, much calmer now.

Pozzo. He has cooled down. (*Looking around.*) In fact everything has become less intense. A great calm seems to be coming over everything. (*Raising his hand.*) Listen ! The God of Nature is asleep.

Vladimir. Will night never come ?

All the three look at the sky.

Pozzo. You don't think you can go away till it is night ?

Estragon. Well, you see, we...

Pozzo. I understand ; what you are doing is perfectly natural. If I were in your situation—that is, if I had an appointment with this man, Godin, Godet, Godot, or whatever is his name, I would keep on waiting till it was dark night. (*He looks at his stool.*) I very much want to sit down, but I don't know how to do so.

Estragon. Can I help you in any way ?

Pozzo. Perhaps you could, by asking me.

Estragon. What ?

Pozzo. By asking me to sit down.

Estragon. Would that be of any help ?

Pozzo. I imagine so.

Estragon. Well, here I do what you suggested. Please seat yourself, sir, I request you.

Pozzo. I can't think of doing so. (*Pause. Aside.*) Ask me once again.

Estragon. Come, I beg of you, please take a seat ; otherwise you will catch pneumonia.

Pozzo. Do you really believe so ?

Estragon. Yes, I am sure of it.

Pozzo. Of course, you are right. (*He sits down.*) I have done so once again ! (*Pause.*) Thank you, my dear. (*Looks at his watch.*) But it is time for me to go, if I am to conform to my programme.

Vladimir. Time has come to a stop.

Pozzo. (*Placing his watch against his ear*) No, sir, you must not believe that this is so. (*Replaces his watch in his pocket.*) You may believe anything but not this.

Estragon. (*To Pozzo*) He is out of humour with everything today. They all seem black to him.

Pozzo. Yes, except the sky ! (*He seems pleased with his witty comment and laughs.*) Now I understand the reason ; you do not belong to this region, so you don't know what effect the twilight has here. Do you want me to tell you that ? (*Silence. Estragon once again plays with his boot ; Vladimir does the same with his hat.*) I can't refuse your request. (*Uses his vaporizer.*) Please pay me some attention. (*Vladimir and Estragon continue their trivial action. Lucky is half asleep. Pozzo cracks his whip mildly.*) This whip seems to be having no effect. (*He gets up and uses the whip with greater force and is at last successful. Lucky jumps. Vladimir's hat, Estragon's boot and Lucky's hat fall to the ground. Pozzo discards the whip.*) This whip is worn out. (*He looks at Vladimir and Estragon.*) What was I saying ?

Vladimir. Let us go now.

Estragon. You must relieve your feet by sitting down, otherwise you will fall dangerously ill.

Pozzo. You are right. (*He sits down. To Estragon.*) What is your name ?

Estragon. My name is Adam.

Pozzo. (*Without having listened*) Yes, that's it. The night approaches. (*He raises his head.*) For pity's sake, please give me a little more attention, otherwise it will be of no use. Look. (*They all look at the sky, except for Lucky who has dozed off once again. Pozzo gives a jerk to the rope.*) Pig, you must look at the sky. (*Lucky looks at the sky.*) Good, that will dŏ. (*They stop looking at the sky.*) What is there so uncommon about it ? I mean with the sky as sky. It is pale and shining like the sky at this time of the day at any other place. (*Pause.*) In this geographical region. (*Pause.*) When the weather is not stormy. (*Becoming lyrical.*) One hour ago (*looking at his watch and speaking prosaically*) after having poured forth brightness (*lyrically*) since roughly ten in the morning. It has been giving off streams of red and white light without getting tired, but now it begins to lose its brightness and becomes a little pale. (*Makes a gesture with the hand, of something gradually declining.*) It has by stages been becoming a little paler all the time. (*Makes a dramatic pause, and spreads out his hands in a wide gesture*) it is totally finished. It comes to rest then. But (*raising his hand as though in warning*) but at the back of this curtain of gentleness and peace night is marching ahead. (*In a trembling voice.*) And will soon burst upon us (*snaps his fingers*) just like that ! (*His inspiration seems to have deserted him.*) Just when we expected it the least ! (*Silence. Sadly.*) That is how things happen on this wretched earth.

Long Silence.

Estragon. Still, it is bearable as long as one knows what it is like.

Vladimir. Then one can wait for the right time.

Estragon. One does not have any extravagant expectations.

Vladimir. One does not have to worry any further.

Estragon. One has only to wait.

Vladimir. We are quite accustomed to waiting.

He picks up his hat, looks inside it, shakes it and then places it on his head.

Pozzo. How did you like (*my speech*) ? (*Vladimir and Estragon look at him blankly.*) Was it good, fair, average or poor ? Or do you think it was positively bad ?

Vladimir. (*First to understand that he is referring to his speech*) Oh, it was very good ; it was really very good.

Pozzo. (*To Estragon*) And what do you think of it, sir ?

Estragon. It was first rate, really first rate.

Pozzo. (*With fervour*) May God bless you, gentlemen ? (*Pause.*) I stand badly in need of encouragement. (*Pause.*) Did you notice that I became a little weak towards the close ?

Vladimir. Perhaps yes, but only to a very slight extent.

Estragon. I thought you were doing it on purpose.

Pozzo. You see the fact is that I do not have a strong memory.

Silence.

Estragon. But in the meanwhile nothing has happened.

Pozzo. Do you find it dull ?

Estragon. To a certain extent, yes.

Pozzo. (*To Vladimir*) And you, sir, how do you feel ?

Vladimir. I also have passed time more enjoyably.

Silence. Pozzo seems to be struggling inwardly.

Pozzo. Gentlemen, you have been very courteous to me.

Estragon. Oh, no, not at all.

Vladimir. It is a strange thing to say !

Pozzo. Yes, your attitude has been very proper. Therefore, I have been asking myself whether there is anything that I can do in turn for such honest fellows as you, who are having such a dull time.

Estragon. We would welcome a gift of even ten francs.

Vladimir. We are not beggars !

Pozzo. I have been asking myself if there is anything I can do to cheer you up. It is true I have given you bones ; I have also talked to you about various things ; I have also explained the twilight to you. All this is true, but I am troubled to think whether it is not enough.

Estragon. Even five francs.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon, angrily*) No more begging !

Estragon. I could not accept less than five francs.

Pozzo. Is what I have done for you enough ? No doubt it is. But I am a generous man ; it is my nature to be so. Especially this evening. That is the bad thing about me. (*He jerks the rope. Lucky looks up at him.*) Because it will cause me suffering. I am sure of that. (*He picks up the whip.*) What would you like ? Shall we make him dance, sing, recite, think, or—

Estragon. Who do you mean ?

Pozzo. Who ? You two know how to think ?

Vladimir. Do you mean this fellow can think ?

Pozzo. Yes, he thinks aloud. Once he even used to think very nicely. Then I could gladly listen to him for hours. Now... (*He shudders*). That is all the worse for me. Well, would you like him to think something for us ?

Estragon. I would prefer him to dance, wouldn't that be more entertaining ?

Pozzo. Not necessarily

Estragon. Didi, don't you think it would be more enjoyable ?

Vladimir. I would very much like to hear him think.

Estragon. Perhaps he could first dance and then think for us, provided it is not too much to ask him to do both the things.

Vladimir. (*To Pozzo*) Would it be possible to have both the things ?

Pozzo. Yes, certainly, it is quite simple. This is the natural sequence of things, first dancing, then thinking.

He gives a short laugh.

Vladimir. Then ask him to dance.

Silence.

Pozzo. Do you hear that, pig ?

Estragon. Doesn't he refuse sometimes ?

Pozzo. He did so once. (*Silence.*) Dance, miserable creature.

Lucky puts down the basket, advances towards the front of the stage, turns to Pozzo. He dances and then stops.

Estragon. Is the dance over ?

Pozzo. Once again !

Lucky goes through the same movements and then stops.

Estragon. Pooh ! I could dance as well myself. (*He imitates Lucky but almost falls.*) That is, after a little practice.

Pozzo. He used to dance various measures like the farandole, the fling, the brawl, the jig, the fandango, and even the horn-pipe. He used to dance for the sheer joy of it. Now the best that he can do is what you saw. Do you know what name he gives to the dance ?

Estragon. Does he call it the Agony of the Scapegoat ?

Vladimir. Does he style it the Hard Stool ?

Pozzo. No, he calls it the Net. He thinks he is caught in a net.

Vladimir. (*Convulsing himself like an aesthete*) Yes, there is something of the net about the dance...

Lucky prepares to go back to his burdens.

Pozzo. You there !

Lucky stands stiff.

Estragon. Tell us about the incident when he refused to carry out your command.

Pozzo. I'll do so with pleasure. (*He searches in his pockets.*) Wait a minute. (*He searches unsuccessfully.*) What have I done with my vaporizer ? (*Searches unsuccessfully.*) Well, this is really strange... (*He looks up, his face full of dismay and anxiety.*) I have lost my vaporizer !...

Estragon. My left lung is very much impaired. (*He coughs weakly, then speaks in a resounding voice*). But my right lung is as sound as a bell.

Pozzo. (*Speaking in his normal tone*) It does not matter. What was I saying ? (*He reflects.*) Wait. (*He thinks hard.*) Now this is incredible ! (*He raises his head.*) Please help me to recollect.

Estragon. Wait a minute !

Vladimir. Wait a little !

Pozzo. Wait !

All of them take off their hats at the same time, press their foreheads with their hands and seem to be thinking hard.

Estragon. (*Victoriously*) Ah, I've got it !

Vladimir. Estragon seems to have recollected it.

Pozzo. (*Impatiently*) What is it ?

Estragon. You were going to tell us why Lucky does not put lown his bags.

Vladimir. Nonsense !

Pozzo. Are you sure it was this ?

Vladimir. Of course not ; you've told us that already.

Pozzo. Have I really told you that ?

Estragon. Has he actually told us ?

Vladimir. And in any case, Lucky has now put down his bags.

Estragon. (*Looking at Lucky*) He has certainly put his bags down. But how does that matter ?

Vladimir. As Lucky has already put down his bags, it is .mpossible that our question was as to why he does not put down his bags.

Pozzo. Your argument is quite strong.

Estragon. And why has he done so ?

Pozzo. Yes, answer that.

Vladimir. He has done so in order to dance.

Estragon. That is true.

Pozzo. Yes, that is correct.

Silence. They put on their hats.

Estragon. Nothing happens, no one either comes or leaves. It is awful !

Vladimir. (*To Pozzo*) Tell him to think.

Pozzo. Give him his hat.

Vladimir. His hat ?

Pozzo. He can't think without putting on his hat.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) Give him his hat.

Estragon. I won't approach him after the way he treated me.

Vladimir. I'll give him his hat.

He does not move.

Estragon. (*To Pozzo*) Tell him to go and bring it himself.

Pozzo. It is better to give it to him.

Vladimir. I shall give it to him.

He picks up the hat and offers it, at an arm's length, to Lucky, who does not move.

Pozzo. You have to put it on his head.

Estragon. (*To Pozzo*) Tell him to take it.

Pozzo. It would be better to put it on his head.

Vladimir. I will put the hat on his head.

He goes round behind Lucky, approaches him carefully, places it cautiously on Lucky's head and at once draws back. Lucky does not move. There is silence.

Estragon. Is he waiting for something ?

Pozzo. Stand back ! (*Vladimir and Estragon move away from Lucky. Pozzo gives a jerk to the rope. Lucky looks at Pozzo.*) Think, pig ! (*Pause. Lucky begins dancing.*) Stop ! (*Lucky stops.*) Forward ! (*Lucky moves forward.*) Stop ! (*Lucky stops.*) Think !

Silence.

Lucky. On the other hand with regard to—

Pozzo. Stop ! (*Lucky stops.*) Turns back ! (*Lucky moves back.*) Stop ! (*Lucky stops.*) Turn ! (*Lucky turns towards the auditorium.*) Think !

During Lucky's long speech the others behave in the following way. Vladimir and Estragon give him full attention. Pozzo appears to be completely disgusted. Then Vladimir and Estragon start protesting and Pozzo seems to be suffering worse. Once again Estragon and Vladimir are attentive but Pozzo becomes still more agitated and even begins to cry as though in pain. Finally, Vladimir and Estragon make a violent protest. Pozzo then jumps up and gives a pull to the rope. There is an all-round cry. Lucky

pulls on the rope, staggers but keeps on speaking in a loud voice. All three of them throw themselves on Lucky who struggles against them but keeps on shouting out his words.

Lucky. If we accept the view of Puncher and Wattmann as put forward in their public works that there exists a personal God... who has a white beard...who is not subject to time without extension ; who is above humanity, who is apathetic, incapable of speech or emotion, who loves all of us except some for reasons which are not known now but which will be revealed in the course of time, who suffers like the heavenly Miranda, for unknown reasons which will become clear in time, for those who are enveloped in suffering, are plunged in fire whose flames if it continues (and who can doubt that) will burn the sky itself, that is to say blast hell so high that it reaches heaven. The sky is so blue, so calm, with a calmness which is broken now and then, no doubt, but which is better than nothing, but not so fast. What is more, considering that as a result of the hard work, left unfinished but honoured by the Academy of Anthropometry of Essy-in-Possy of Testew and Cunard, it is proved conclusively what will be clear afterwards but not so fast, that for unknown reasons, as a result of the public works of Puncher and Wattmann, it is established beyond dispute, that in view of the labours of Belcher and Fartov left unfinished for unknown reasons, and of Testew and Cunard, also left unfinished, that man in Essy, that man briefly and in short, in spite of great progress achieved in digestion and excretion, is seen to grow weak and to suffer, in spite of development of physical culture and of sports such as tennis, football, running, cycling, swimming, flying, floating, riding, gliding, changing desire into action, camogie skating, tennis of all kinds, dying, flying, sports of all sorts played in autumn, summer and winter, tennis of all kinds, hockey of all sorts, penicilline and succedanea. In short, I resume, at the same time and at once, for reasons unknown, man is shrinking and pining. in spite of the tennis, I resume, and flying, gliding, playing golf over nine and eighteen holes, and playing tennis of all sorts. In a word, for reasons unknown in Feckham, Peckham, Fulham, Clapham, that is to say, simultaneously and at once, what is more, for reasons not known now but ones which time will reveal, man is shrinking and dwindling. I resume, Fulham, Clapham, in short the dead loss per head since the death of Bishop Berkeley being in the amount of one inch four ounce per head, approximately, on the whole, rounded of to the nearest decimal. Completely naked, and with only stockings on the feet in Connemara, in short, for reasons unknown, it does not matter why, there are the facts, and considering what is far more serious, that in view of the labours, now lost, of Steinweg and Peterman that in the plains, in the mountains, by the seas, by the rivers, running water, running fire, the air is the same and also the earth, namely the air and the earth in the great cold, the great dark, the air, the earth, the place of stones, in the great cold, alas, alas, in the year six hundred and something after Christ,.

the air, the earth, the sea, the earth which is a place of stones only, in the great deeps, the great cold, on sea, on land and in the air. I resume, for reasons unknown, in spite of the tennis, the facts are there but only time will bring them out ; I resume, alas, alas, on, on, in short, on a place of stones, who can doubt it ? I resume, but not so fast, I resume, the skull, the wasting and shrinking, at the same time and at once, what is for reasons unknown, in spite of the tennis, on the beard, the flames, the tears, the stones. So blue, so calm, alas, alas, on the skull, the skull, the skull, the skull in Connemara, in spite of tennis, the labours left when they were incomplete, more serious, still abode of stones. In short, I resume, alas, alas, left unfinished, the skull, the skull in Connemara, in spite of tennis, the skull, alas, the stones, Cunard. (*General disturbance. Loud shouting.*) Tennis...the stones...so calm...Cunard...unfinished...

Pozzo. Take away his hat !

Vladimir catches hold of Lucky's hat. Lucky is silent. He falls, there is silence. The victors are breathing quickly.

Estragon. I am avenged on him now.

Vladimir examines the hat and looks inside it.

Pozzo. Give it to me. (*He snatches the hat from Vladimir, throws it on the ground, then walks on it.*) That is the end of his thinking !

Vladimir. Do you think he will still be able to walk ?

Pozzo. If he can't walk he must crawl. (*He kicks Lucky.*) Get up, you pig !

Estragon. I wonder if he is dead !

Vladimir. You will kill him if you go on kicking him like this.

Pozzo. Get up, you dirt ! (*He jerks the rope.*) Help me !

Vladimir. How can we do so ?

Pozzo. By raising Lucky up.

Vladimir and Estragon lift Lucky to his feet. After supporting him for an instant, they release him. Lucky falls.

Estragon. He is doing so deliberately.

Pozzo. You must keep on holding him. (*Pause.*) Come on, raise him up again.

Estragon. Let him go to hell !

Vladimir Come on, only once more.

Estragon. Does he think we are his servants ?

They raise Lucky and hold him up.

Pozzo. Don't leave him yet. (*Vladimir and Estragon totter under the strain of holding Lucky.*) Don't move ! Hold him tightly. (*He restores the bag to Lucky's hand. At the touch of the bag, Lucky regains his senses and his fingers hold its handle.*) Hold him tightly ! (*Does the same with the basket*). Now ! You can release him. (*Vladimir and Estragon move away from Lucky, who totters, staggers, bends low but succeeds in retaining his balance, holding the bag and the basket in his hands. Pozzo steps back and gives Lucky a crack with the whip.*) Move forward ! (*Lucky staggers forward.*) Move back ! (*Lucky staggers back.*) Turn ! (*Lucky turns.*) I have managed it ! He can still walk. (*Turning towards Vladimir and Estragon.*) Thank you, gentlemen, and let me (*Searching unsuccessfully through his pockets.*)...let me wish you...(*still searching*) wish you (*searching*) what have I done with my watch ? (*Searches again.*) It was a genuine half-hunter, with perfect escapement ! (*Sobbing.*) My grandfather gave it to me. (*He searches on the ground. Vladimir and Estragon do the same. With his foot Pozzo turns over what is left of Lucky's hat.*) Well, is that not amazing ?

Vladimir. May be it is still on its chain.

Pozzo. Wait ! (*He bends double in an effort to put his ear to his stomach and then listens. Silence.*) I cannot hear anything. (*He makes a sign to them to come nearer. Vladimir and Estragon go towards him. They also bend over his stomach.*) One ought to be able to hear the tick-tick, if the watch were there.

Vladimir. Be silent.

All listen, while still bent double.

Estragon. I can hear a sound.

Pozzo. Where is it ?

Vladimir. It is the sound of the heart.

Pozzo. (*Disappointed*) To hell with it !

Vladimir. Keep quiet !

Estragon. It is possible that the watch has stopped.

They straighten up.

Pozzo. Which one of you gives out such a bad smell ?

Estragon. Both ; for he has bad breath and I have evil-smelling feet.

Pozzo. It is time for me to go.

Estragon. What about your half-hunter ?

Pozzo. It is possible that I left it at the manor.

Silence.

Estragon. Good-bye, then.

Pozzo. Good-bye.

Vladimir. Good-bye.

Pozzo. Good-bye.

Silence. No one moves.

Vladimir. Good-bye.

Pozzo. Good-bye.

Estragon. Good-bye.

Silence.

Pozzo. Moreover, I must thank you.

Vladimir. I thank *you.*

Pozzo. Not at all.

Estragon. Yes, I must thank you.

Pozzo. Oh, no, there is no need.

Vladimir. I must.

Estragon. No, you need not.

Silence.

Pozzo. I seem to be unable to...(*Hesitates for a long time*)...to leave.

Estragon. Life is like that.

Pozzo turns, moves away from Lucky towards the wings, releasing more rope as he goes.

Vladimir. You are going in the opposite direction.

Pozzo. From there I will make a running start. (*Having reached the end of the rope, he is now off-stage. He stops, turns and cries.*) Stand back ! (*Vladimir and Estragon stand back. They look towards Pozzo. The sound of the cracking of the whip is heard.*) On ! On !

Estragon. On !

Vladimir. On !

Lucky moves off.

Pozzo. Faster ! (*He appears, crosses the stage, with Lucky in front of him. Vladimir and Estragon wave their hats. Exit Lucky.*) On ! On ! (*He is on the point of disappearing from the stage in his turn ; just then he suddenly turns back. The rope becomes stretched tight. There is a noise suggesting that Lucky has fallen off.*) Stool ! (*Vladimir brings the stool and gives it to Pozzo. Pozzo throws the stool to Lucky.*) Good-bye !

Vladimir. }
Estragon. } (*Waving to him*) Good-bye !

Pozzo. Stand up, pig ! (*There is the sound of Lucky getting up.*) On ! (*Exit Pozzo.*) Faster ! On ! Good-bye ! Pig ! Faster ! Good-bye !

There is a long silence.

Vladimir. That helped us to pass the time.

Estragon. But time would have passed in any case.

Vladimir. But it would not have passed so quickly.

Pause.

Estragon. What are we to do now ?

Vladimir. I don't know.

Estragon. Let us leave.

Vladimir. We cannot leave.

Estragon. Why can't we ?

Vladimir. Because we are waiting for Godot.

Estragon. (*In despair*) Yes, that's right.

Pause.

Vladimir They have changed a lot.

Estragon. Who do you mean ?

Vladimir. Those two.

Estragon. That's a good idea ; let us have some conversation.

Vladimir. But haven't they ?

Estragon. What ?

Vladimir. I mean 'changed'.

Estragon. That is quite likely. All of them change ; only we can't change.

Vladimir. Not merely 'likely' but quite certain. Did you not see them ?

Estragon. Well, I think I did see them. But I don't know them.

Vladimir. I think you do know them.

Estragon. No, I'm sure I don't know them.

Vladimir. I tell you, both of us know them. You forget everything. (*Pause. To himself.*) Unless, of course, they are some different people...

Estragon. In that case they ought to have recognised us.

Vladimir. That doesn't matter. You see, I also pretended not to recognise them. Moreover, nobody ever recognises us.

Estragon. Give it no thought. What we need—Ow ! (*Vladimir remains indifferent.*) Ow !

Vladimir. (*To himself*) Unless they are not the same people.

Estragon. Didi, it is the other foot now !

He goes towards the mount, walking on one foot.

Vladimir. Unless they are not the same people...

Boy. (*Off-stage*) Mister !

Estragon stops. Both look in the direction of the voice.

Estragon. There we are again.

Vladimir. Come near, my child.

Enter boy, timidly. He stops.

Boy. Are you Mr. Albert ?

Vladimir. Yes.

Estragon. What do you want ?

Vladimir. Come nearer.

Still the boy does not move from his place.

Estragon. (*Strongly*) When you are asked to come near, you must do so.

The boy comes a little nearer timidly and then stops.

Vladimir. What is your business ?

Boy. Mr. Godot...

Vladimir. That is clear...(*Pause.*) Come near.

Estragon. (*With violence*) Will you come near ? How did you get so late ?

Vladimir. Do you bring a message from Mr. Godot ?

Boy. Yes, sir, I do.

Vladimir. Well, what's the message ?

Estragon. How did you get so late ?

The boy looks at them in turn, not able to decide which question should be answered first.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) You leave him alone.

Estragon. (*Violently*) It is you who must leave me alone. (*Advancing to the Boy.*) Do you know what time it is now ?

Boy. (*Drawing back*) It is not my fault, sir.

Estragon. Then whose fault is it ? Mine ?

Boy. I was afraid, sir.

Estragon. What were you afraid of ? Us ? (*Pause.*) Answer my question.

Vladimir. I know how it was. He was afraid of the others.

Estragon. How long have you been at this place ?

Boy. For quite some time, sir.

Vladimir. Were you afraid of the whip ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. And of the loud noises ?

Boy. That is right, sir.

Vladimir. You were afraid of the two big men ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. Do you know the men ?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir Do you belong to this area ? *(Silence.)* Do you belong to these parts ?

Boy. Yes, sir, I do.

Estragon. These are all lies. *(Shaking the Boy by the arm.)* You must speak the truth.

Boy. *(Trembling)* What I am saying is the truth, sir.

Vladimir. Why don't you leave him alone ? What has happened to you ? *(Estragon lets the Boy free. Estragon moves away, covering his face with both his hands. The Boy and Vladimir look at him as he does so. Estragon drops his hands ; his face is seen to be distorted as though with pain.)* What is wrong with you ?

Estragon. I am unhappy.

Vladimir. Is that really so ? How long back did this happen ?

Estragon. I do not remember.

Vladimir. Memory plays strange tricks on us. *(Estragon tries to speak, gives up the idea and limps back to his place. He sits down there and begins to take off his boots. To Boy.)* Well ?

Boy. Mr. Godot—

Vladimir. Is it correct that I have seen you before ?

Boy. I don't know that, sir.

Vladimir. You don't know me ?

Boy. No, sir, I don't.

Vladimir. Was it not you who came yesterday ?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir. Are you coming for the first time today ?

Boy. That is right, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. These are mere words. (*Pause.*) You may speak now.

Boy. (*Hurriedly*) Mr. Godot asked me to tell you that he would not be able to come this evening, but that he will surely come tomorrow.

Silence.

Vladimir. Is that all you were asked to say ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. Do you work for Mr. Godot ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. What is your job ?

Boy. I look after his goats.

Vladimir. Does he treat you well ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. Does he not beat you ?

Boy. No, sir, he doesn't beat me.

Vladimir. Whom does he beat ?

Boy. He beats my brother, sir.

Vladimir. Ah, you have a brother also ?

Boy. That is right, sir.

Vladimir. What does your brother do ?

Boy. He looks after the sheep, sir.

Vladimir. Why does he not beat you ?

Boy. That I don't know, sir.

Vladimir. He must be liking you.

Boy. I don't know that, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. Do you get enough food to eat? (*The Boy seems reluctant to answer.*) Do you get good and sufficient food?

Boy. It is moderately well, sir.

Vladimir. I hope you are not unhappy? (*The Boy seems reluctant to answer.*) Did you hear what I said?

Boy. Yes, sir, I have heard you.

Vladimir. What is your answer, then?

Boy. I don't know what to say, sir.

Vladimir. Do you know whether you are happy or unhappy?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir. Your condition is as bad as my own. (*Silence.*) Where do you sleep?

Boy. I sleep in the loft, sir.

Vladimir. Does your brother also sleep there?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. Do you sleep in the hay?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. All right, you may go now.

Boy. What am I to tell Mr. Godot, sir?

Vladimir. You may tell him...(*He hesitates.*)...tell him that you saw us. (*Pause.*) You agree that you saw us?

Boy. Yes, sir.

The Boy steps back, hesitates a little and then goes out running. The light suddenly goes dim. In a moment it is night. At the back the moon is seen to rise in the sky and then go higher. It stands still there, shedding pale light on the scene.

Vladimir. At last, it is night. (*Estragon gets up and goes towards Vladimir, a boot in each hand. He puts the boots down at the end of the stage, then straightens and looks at the moon.*) What are you doing?

Estragon. The moon is pale because of weariness.

Vladimir. Eh?

Estragon. Because it has to climb in the sky and has to gaze on people like us.

Vladimir. What are you doing with your boots ?

Estragon. (*Looking at the boots*) I am going to leave them there. (*Pause.*) Some one else will come...like me, but with smaller feet. These will make him comfortable.

Vladimir. But you can't walk barefoot !

Estragon. Christ walked barefooted.

Vladimir. Christ ? How is Christ relevant here ? You can't compare yourself to Christ !

Estragon. On the contrary, I have compared myself to him all my life.

Vladimir But Christ lived in a warm and dry country.

Estragon. Yes. Moreover, they crucified him quickly.

Silence.

Vladimir. Our work here is over.

Estragon. There is nothing we have to do at any other place.

Vladimir. Please, Gogo, don't talk like that. Everything will be better tomorrow.

Estragon. How have you reached that conclusion ?

Vladimir. Did you not hear the words of the child ?

Estragon. No, I didn't.

Vladimir. The boy said that Godot will certainly come tomorrow. (*Pause.*) What is your reaction to that ?

Estragon. In that case we can go on waiting right here.

Vladimir. Have you gone mad ? We must take shelter for the night. (*He holds Estragon by the arm.*) Come along with me.

He pulls Estragon after him. Estragon submits at first but then resists. They stop.

Estragon. (*Looking at the tree*) It is a pity that we do not have a piece of rope.

Vladimir. Come along, it is cold.

He pulls Estragon after him as earlier.

Estragon. Remind me to bring a piece of rope with me tomorrow.

Vladimir. Yes, I'll do so. Now come along.

Once again pulls Estragon after him.

Estragon. How long in all have we two been together ?

Vladimir. I don't know exactly ; perhaps fifty years.

Estragon. Do you remember the day when I jumped into the Rhone ?

Vladimir. We were harvesting grapes at that time.

Estragon. You fished me out of the river.

Vladimir. That is an old story now.

Estragon. My clothes dried in the sun.

Vladimir. What is the use of remembering all that. Come on.

He draws Estragon after him as before.

Estragon. Wait a moment.

Vladimir. I'm feeling cold.

Estragon. Wait ! (*He moves away from Vladimir.*) I wonder whether it would not have been better for each one of us if we had been alone and taken care of us individually. (*Crossing the stage, he sits down on the mound.*) We were not made to be companions.

Vladimir. (*Calmly*) I'm not certain of that.

Estragon. One cannot be certain of anything.

Vladimir slowly crosses the stage and sits down on the mound.

Vladimir. If you think it would be better for us, we can part even now.

Estragon. It would not be worth while to do so now.

Silence.

Vladimir. True, it is no use doing that now.

Silence.

Estragon. Well, shall we go now ?

Vladimir. Yes, we can go now.

They remain stationary.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE : *The same as in Act I. Next day, at the same time.*

STAGE DIRECTION : *Estragon's boots can be seen lying to the front of the centre of the stage. Their heels have been placed together. Lucky's hat lies at the same place where it was seen in Act I. Five or six leaves can now be seen on the tree. Vladimir enters in some agitation. He stops and has a long look at the tree. Then, quite suddenly, he begins to move on the stage in great excitement. He stops in front of the boots, picks up and smells one of them after having examined it closely. Showing signs of disgust, he puts the boot back in its place. He keeps on moving on to the stage and out of it. He stops at the extreme right edge of the stage and looks into the distance, shading his eyes with his hand. Enters and goes out. Repeats the same action, this time on the extreme left of the stage. He comes to a stop all of a sudden and breaks out into loud singing.*

Vladimir. A dog came in—

Realising that he began on too high a note he stops, clears his throat and recommences singing.

A dog entered the kitchen and took away a piece of the dry outer part of a bread. The cook came running in with a ladle and kept on beating the dog till he was dead. Thereupon all the dogs came running and dug a tomb for the dead dog—

He stops, goes into deep thought and then begins the song once again.

All the dogs came running there and dug a grave for their dead comrade. On the tombstone they wrote an epitaph for the benefit of the future generations of dogs :

A dog entered a kitchen and stole away a piece of bread crust. Then the cook arrived with a ladle and beat the dog to death.

All the dogs came running there and dug a grave for the dead dog—

He stops, meditates and recommences.

All the dogs came there running and dug a tomb for the dog who had been beaten to death—

He stops, reflects and then resumes in a soft voice.

They dug a grave for the dead dog.

He remains silent and stationary for a moment, then begins to move about the stage excitedly. He stops before the tree and moves to and fro. He stops before the boots and repeats the same action. He stops, alternately, at the extreme right and extreme left of the stage and looks into the distance. Estragon enters from the right side. He is barefooted and has his head bowed. He crosses the stage slowly. Vladimir turns round and sees his fellow-tramp.

Vladimir. You have come again ! (*Estragon stops but does not raise his head. Vladimir approaches him.*) Come here till I embrace you.

Estragon. I don't want you to touch me.

Vladimir recoils in pain.

Vladimir. Do you want that I should go away ? (*Pause.*) Gogo ! (*Pause. Vladimir looks at him with great attention.*) Did they beat you ? (*Pause.*) Gogo ! (*Estragon continues to remain silent, with his head bowed.*) Where did you pass the night ?

Estragon. You must not touch me ! Ask me no questions ! Don't say anything to me either, but remain by my side.

Vladimir. Have I ever deserted you ?

Estragon. You allowed me to go away.

Vladimir. Look at me. (*As Estragon still does not raise his head, he speaks with some vehemence.*) Are you going to look at me or not ?

Estragon raises his head. They look at each other for a long time and then embrace each other, thumping each other on the back. They discontinue the embrace. Since Estragon is no longer supported by his friend, he almost falls.

Estragon. It was a strange day !

Vladimir. Tell me, who beat you ?

Estragon. One more day over.

Vladimir. It is not over yet.

Estragon. It is over so far as I am concerned, irrespective of what else may happen now. (*Silence.*) I heard you singing a song.

Vladimir. That's right ; I remember I was singing.

Estragon. That was too much for me to bear. I said to myself : now that my friend is absolutely alone, he feels so relieved that he begins to sing.

Vladimir. One cannot control one's moods. I have been in high spirits all day. (*Pause.*) I didn't get up during the night (to urinate) even once.

Estragon. There you are ! Even your kidneys function better in my absence !

Vladimir. I did miss you, but, at the same time, I also felt happy in your absence. Is this not a strange thing ?

Estragon. (*Shocked*) Were you happy in my absence ?

Vladimir. Perhaps that is not the right word to describe my feelings.

Estragon. And how do you feel now ?

Vladimir. Now ?...(*Joyous.*) I am happy you are back. (*Indifferent.*) We are together once again. (*Gloomy.*) There am I, as bad as ever.

Estragon. That means you feel worse when I am with you. I also feel better when I am alone.

Vladimir. (*Annoyed*) Then why do you come crawling back to me ?

Estragon. I really don't know.

Vladimir. But I know the reason. You come back because you don't know how to defend yourself. I would not have allowed them to beat you.

Estragon. You would not have been able to stop them.

Vladimir. Why do you say so ?

Estragon. Because there were ten of them.

Vladimir. I mean I would have prevented their beating you, not defended you by fighting against them. I would have prevented you from doing whatever it was that annoyed those people.

Estragon. But I was not doing anything.

Vladimir. What then was their reason for beating you ?

Estragon. I don't know that.

Vladimir. The real thing is that you are not very observant. There are things which you miss but I notice quite clearly. I think you must be feeling the same yourself.

Estragon. I repeat that I was not doing anything at the time.

Vladimir. It is quite possible that you were not. Still, even the way of doing nothing is important. It is important if you want to go on living.

Estragon. I was doing nothing.

Vladimir. You also must be happy inwardly without knowing it.

Estragon. Happy about what ?

Vladimir. On coming back to me once again.

Estragon. Do you really feel so ?

Vladimir. You are happy, even if what I say is not true.

Estragon. What must I say now ?

Vladimir. You must say that you are happy.

Estragon. I am happy.

Vladimir. I also am happy.

Estragon. I also.

Vladimir. We are happy.

Estragon. We are both happy. (*Silence.*) Now that we are happy, what are we to do ?

Vladimir. We must wait for Godot. (*Estragon emits a painful sound. Silence.*) Things have changed from what they were yesterday.

Estragon. What shall we do if Godot does not come ?

Vladimir. (*After a moment's intense confusion*) We shall discuss that when the time comes. (*Pause.*) I was saying that everything here is different from what it was yesterday.

Estragon. Everything seems to be giving out moisture.

Vladimir. Have a look at that tree.

Estragon. It is a different pus from one moment to another.

Vladimir. Look at that tree !

Estragon looks at the tree.

Estragon. I think this tree was here yesterday also.

Vladimir. Of course it was here yesterday also. Don't you remember ? We were on the point of hanging ourselves from it. You were opposed to it. Don't you remember ?

Estragon. You must have dreamt it.

Vladimir. Is it possible that you have already forgotten what happened yesterday ?

Estragon. That is my nature ; either I forget a thing immediately, or I do not forget it at all.

Vladimir. Have you also forgotten Pozzo and Lucky ?

Estragon. Pozzo and Lucky ?

Vladimir. You have forgotten everything !

Estragon. I remember a madman who kicked me hard enough to break my shins. After that he acted like a fool.

Vladimir. His name was Lucky.

Estragon. I recollect that. But when did it happen ?

Vladimir. There was also his master. Do you not remember him ?

Estragon. Yes, he gave me a bone.

Vladimir. That man's name was Pozzo.

Estragon. You say all that took place yesterday ?

Vladimir. Yes, of course it happened yesterday.

Estragon. Did it happen at the same place where we are standing now ?

Vladimir. Where else do you think it could have happened ? Don't you recognise the place ?

Estragon. (*Becoming angry suddenly*) Recognize ! What is there in it which one should recognize ? All my wretched life I have crawled in mud ! And you think it proper to talk to me about scenery ? (*Looking wildly around him.*) Look at this heap of rubbish ! I have never gone away from it.

Vladimir. Calm yourself down.

Estragon. You and your landscapes ! I would rather you talked about worms !

Vladimir. All the same, you can't say that this (*pointing around him*) resembles in any way the Macon country, for example. You have to agree that there is a big difference between the two.

Estragon. Why do you mention the Macon country ? I never referred to it.

Vladimir. But you yourself have been in the Macon country.

Estragon. No, I never lived in Macon country. I have passed all my detestable life here in this region. Here, in this Cackon country.

Vladimir. But we were there together in Macon. I can swear to this. I used to pick grapes there for a man called...(*snapping his fingers*) I forget the name of the man, at a place known as (*snapping his fingers again*) I can't even remember the name of the place, don't you remember its name ?

Estragon. It is possible that we lived there. I did not notice anything.

Vladimir. But everything is red in that region.

Estragon. (*Very much annoyed*) I tell you, I didn't notice anything.

Silence. Vladimir sighs deeply.

Vladimir. It is not easy to go on with you. Gogo.

Estragon. It would be better for us to part from each other.

Vladimir. You always say the same thing, yet you come crawling back to me each time.

Estragon. The best thing would be to kill me, like that other man.

Vladimir. What other man? (*Pause.*) What other person?

Estragon. Like billions of other people.

Vladimir. (*Speaking in a pithy manner*) Everyone has to bear his own little cross. (*He heaves a sigh.*) He must do so till his death. (*Adds an afterthought.*) And is forgotten.

Estragon. In the meanwhile let us try to have some calm conversation, since we are not capable of remaining silent.

Vladimir. Yes, you are right; our power of speech is inexhaustible.

Estragon. We talk so that we do not have to think.

Vladimir. Yes, we have that excuse for talking.

Estragon. It also saves us from hearing voices.

Vladimir. Yes, we have several reasons for talking.

Estragon. There are all those dead voices.

Vladimir. They make a noise like the movement of wings.

Estragon. No, like the rustling of leaves.

Vladimir. Like sand.

Estragon. No, like leaves.

Silence.

Vladimir. The voices speak all at the same time.

Estragon. Each voice seems to be speaking to itself.

Silence.

Vladimir. They whisper rather than speak.

Estragon. They create a rustling sound.

Vladimir. It is more like a murmur.

Estragon. No, it is a rustling sound.

Silence.

Vladimir. What do those voices say ?

Estragon. They talk about the lives they themselves led.

Vladimir. It is not enough for them that they lived.

Estragon. No, they must talk about it also.

Vladimir. They do not think even death to be enough for them.

Estragon. No, they don't consider it sufficient.

Silence.

Vladimir. They create a sound like that of feathers.

Estragon. No, it is like that of leaves.

Vladimir. No, like ashes.

Estragon. Like leaves.

There is a long silence.

Vladimir. Please say something.

Estragon. I am trying to do so.

There is a long silence.

Vladimir. (*In agony*) Say anything that comes to your mind.

Estragon. What are we to do now ?

Vladimir. We must wait for Godot.

Estragon. Yes, that's true.

Silence.

Vladimir. This is terrible.

Estragon. You must sing something.

Vladimir. No, no. (*He thinks hard.*) Perhaps we could begin all over once again.

Estragon. That should be quite easy.

Vladimir. It is only the starting which is difficult.

Estragon. But you can start wherever you like.

Vladimir. But you have to decide where to begin.

Estragon. That is quite true.

Silence.

Vladimir. Help me !

Estragon. I am trying to do so.

Silence.

Vladimir. When you try to find something, you have to hear voices.

Estragon. Yes, that's quite true.

Vladimir. The voices prevent you from finding what you seek.

Estragon. That is correct.

Vladimir. Hearing also prevents you from thinking.

Estragon. But in spite of that you keep on thinking.

Vladimir. No, it is impossible to do so.

Estragon. That's a fine idea. Let us go on contradicting each other.

Vladimir. It is impossible.

Estragon. Do you think so ?

Vladimir. There is no danger that we may ever think any more.

Estragon. In that case what are we complaining about ?

Vladimir. There are worse things than thinking.

Estragon. Perhaps. But at least there is that.

Vladimir. That what ?

Estragon. That's a fine idea. Let us ask each other questions.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

Vladimir. What do you mean when you say, "There is at least that ?"

Estragon. At least there is so much misery less.

Vladimir. That is true.

Estragon. Well ? How about thanking God for His small kindnesses ?

Vladimir. But even having thought in the past is terrible.

Estragon. Did we ever really think ?

Vladimir. Then where do all these dead bodies come from ?

Estragon. Yes, and all these skeletons.

Vladimir. Yes, tell me, where do they come from, then ?

Estragon. That is true, there's no answer to this.

Vladimir. We must have thought at least to some extent.

Estragon. Yes, only at the start.

Vladimir. It is like a place where decaying bodies are kept.

Estragon. You need not look around ?

Vladimir. How can one help looking around ?

Estragon. No, one can't.

Vladimir. Howsoever hard one may try.

Estragon. I didn't hear you.

Vladimir. I said, "Howsoever hard one might try."

Estragon. We should turn towards Nature in a determined way.

Vladimir. We have tried that also.

Estragon. Yes, we have.

Vladimir. I know, doing that is not the worst.

Estragon. Doing what ?

Vladimir. To have thought.

Estragon. That is quite obvious.

Vladimir. But we could have managed without thinking.

Estragon. Que voulez-vous ? [French—What do you wish ?]

Vladimir. What did you say ?

Estragon. Que voulez-vous ?

Vladimir. Ah, exactly as you say.

Silence.

Estragon. It was quite a good effort on our part.

Vladimir. Yes, but now there is the problem of finding something else to talk about.

Estragon. Let me think about it.

He takes off his hat and thinks hard.

Vladimir. Let me also think. (*He also takes off his hat and thinks hard. There is a long silence.*) Ah !

They put on their hats and become relaxed.

Estragon. Well ?

Vladimir. Just help me recall what I was saying ; we can continue from there.

Estragon. To what time are you referring ?

Vladimir. At the very beginning.

Estragon. The very beginning of what ?

Vladimir. Of this evening...I was saying...I was saying...

Estragon. I am not a historian that I should have a record of the past.

Vladimir. Wait...we embraced...we were happy...We said what are we to do now that we are happy...We said we must go on waiting...Keep on waiting...Let me think...I am beginning to recollect. I said we must go on waiting...now that we are happy... let me think. Ah ! The tree !

Estragon. What about the tree ?

Vladimir. Bu don't you remember ?

Estragon. No, I am too tired to recollect.

Vladimir. Look at it.

They look at the tree.

Estragon. I don't see anything significant.

Vladimir. This tree was quite black and bare yesterday. Now it is covered with leaves.

Estragon. Leaves ?

Vladimir. Yes, they have grown in a single night.

Estragon. This must be because Spring has set in.

Vladimir. But how could it happen in just one night ?

Estragon. I tell you we did not come here yesterday. It is another of your bad dreams.

Vladimir. Then where do you say we were last evening ?

Estragon. How do I know ? Perhaps we were in some other part of emptiness. There is no dearth of empty space.

Vladimir. (*Looking sure of himself*) All right. You say we weren't here yesterday evening. Then tell me, what did we do yesterday evening ?

Estragon. Do ?

Vladimir. Try to recollect.

Estragon. Do...I suppose we just talked endlessly.

Vladimir. (*Controlling himself*) What did we talk about ?

Estragon. Oh...all sorts of things, I suppose, nothing very particular. (*With confidence.*) Yes, I remember now. We spent last evening in talking about nothing in particular. We have been doing that for fifty years now.

Vladimir. Don't you remember any fact, any happening of last evening ?

Estragon. (*Tired*) Don't trouble me thus, Didi.

Vladimir. The sun, the moon. Don't you remember anything that we said about them ?

Estragon Well, the sun and the moon must have been there as usual last evening also.

Vladimir. Don't you remember anything uncommon ?

Estragon. Alas, I can't !

Vladimir. Not even about Pozzo and Lucky ?

Estragon. Pozzo ?

Vladimir. The bones he gave you.

Estragon. They were as thin as fishbones.

Vladimir. It was Pozzo who gave you those bones.

Estragon. I don't know that.

Vladimir. Don't you remember the kick you got ?

Estragon. Yes, I remember that someone gave me a kick.

Vladimir. It was Lucky who kicked you.

Estragon. Did all that happen yesterday ?

Vladimir. Show me your leg.

Estragon. Which one ?

Vladimir. Both of them. Pull your trousers up. (*Estragon extends one leg towards Vladimir and begins to stagger. Vladimir holds his leg. He also begins staggering. They both stagger.*) Pull your trousers up.

Estragon. I can't do so.

Vladimir pulls up his trousers and looks at his leg. He lets it go and Estragon almost falls.

Vladimir. Give me the other leg. (*Estragon gives the same leg again.*) The other leg, pig ! (*Estragon gives the other leg. Victoriously.*) There is the wound ! It has begun to get infected.

Estragon. What does that mean ?

Vladimir. (*Releasing the leg*) Where are your boots ?

Estragon. I must have thrown them away.

Vladimir. When ?

Estragon. I don't know.

Vladimir. Why ?

Estragon. (*Irritably*) How can I say why I don't know ?

Vladimir. No, what I mean is, why did you throw your boots away ?

Estragon. (*Annoyed*) I must have done so because they were hurting me.

Vladimir. (*Pointing to the boots victoriously*) They are lying there ! (*Estragon looks at the boots.*) They are lying at the very spot where you placed them yesterday.

Estragon goes towards the boots and looks at them closely.

Estragon. They are not my boots.

Vladimir. (*Dazed*) Aren't they ?

Estragon. My boots were black. These are brown.

Vladimir. Are you sure your boots were really black ?

Estragon. Well, they were a shade of grey.

Vladimir. Are these brown. Show them to me.

Estragon. (*Picking up the boots*) Well, they are of a greenish colour.

Vladimir. Let me see them. (*Estragon hands him the boot. Vladimir looks at it closely, then throws it down in anger.*) Well, of all the—

Estragon. Well, what you have said is all a lot of bloody—

Vladimir. Ah, I now understand what must have happened.

Estragon. What you say is all a lot of bloody—

Vladimir. It is quite simple. Somebody came here, took up your boots and left his own in return.

Estragon. Why did he do that ?

Vladimir. His own boots were too tight for him ; therefore he took yours.

Estragon. But my boots also were too tight.

Vladimir. They were too tight for you, not for him.

Estragon. (*Being unsuccessful in understanding this*) I am tired. (*Pause.*) Let us leave.

Vladimir. We can't leave.

Estragon. Why can't we ?

Vladimir. We can't leave because we are waiting for Godot.

Estragon. Ah ! (*Pause. In despair.*) What are we to do now ?

Vladimir. There is nothing for us to do.

Estragon. But I cannot go on like this.

Vladimir. Would you like to have a radish ?

Estragon. Don't you have anything else ?

Vladimir. I have radishes and turnips.

Estragon. Don't you have any carrots ?

Vladimir. No, and in any case you eat too many carrots.

Estragon. Then I'll have a radish. (*Vladimir searches awkwardly in his pockets ; he finds nothing but turnips. At last he finds a radish and gives it to Estragon. The latter examines it and smells it.*) It is a black radish.

Vladimir. Nonetheless it is a radish.

Estragon. But you must know I only like pink radishes.

Vladimir. That means you don't want to eat this one ?

Estragon. I said I like only pink radishes !

Vladimir. Then return this one to me.

Estragon returns the radish.

Estragon. I'll go and get a carrot.

He does not move.

Vladimir. This is becoming really meaningless.

Estragon. No, it is not insignificant enough as yet.

Silence.

Vladimir. What do you think of trying them ?

Estragon. I have tried everything.

Vladimir. I mean the boots.

Estragon. Do you think it would be a good thing ?

Vladimir. It would help us to pass the time. (*Estragon is hesitant.*) I can assure you that this will keep us busy.

Estragon. It will provide relaxation.

Vladimir. It will recreate us.

Estragon. It will give relaxation.

Vladimir. Let us try.

Estragon. Would you lend me a hand ?

Vladimir. Of course I will.

Estragon. Didi, don't the two of us manage things quite nicely ?

Vladimir. True. Come along, first we'll try the left boot.

Estragon. Didi, don't we always manage to find something to do which gives us the impression that we exist ?

Vladimir. (*Impatiently*) Yes, we do. We are magicians, in fact. However, let us persist in doing what we decided to do, otherwise we might forget what it was. (*He picks up a boot.*) Come on, give me your foot. (*Estragon raises his foot.*) The other foot, pig ! (*Estragon raises the other foot.*) Raise it higher. (*Twined together the two tramps stagger about the stage. At last, Vladimir succeeds in getting the foot into the boot.*) Try to walk about. (*Estragon walks.*) Well, how does it feel ?

Estragon. The boot fits.

Vladimir. (*Taking a string from his pocket*) We'll try to lace the shoe.

Estragon. (*Strongly*) No, I don't want any laces.

Vladimir. You'll be sorry not to have them. Let us try the other boot. (*Does as before.*) Well ?

Estragon. (*Unwillingly*) This also fits.

Vladimir. Don't they give you pain ?

Estragon. Not yet.

Vladimir. That means you can keep these boots.

Estragon. But they are too big.

Vladimir. Perhaps you will have socks some day ; then the boots would fit you.

Estragon. That is true.

Vladimir. That means you will keep them.

Estragon. Say no more about these boots.

Vladimir. That's right, but—

Estragon. (*With violence*) That's enough ! I think I might sit down now.

He looks for a place to sit down, then goes to the mound and sits there.

Vladimir. Yesterday evening also, you were sitting exactly at the same place.

Estragon. I wish I could sleep.

Vladimir. You did sleep yesterday.

Estragon. I shall try to sleep, again.

He goes into a posture like a foetus, holding his head between his knees.

Vladimir. Wait. (*He goes over and sits down by the side of Estragon and begins to sing loudly.*)

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye—

Estragon. (*Angrily*) Don't sing so loud !

Vladimir. (*Sings softly*)

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye...

(*Estragon goes to sleep. Vladimir gets up quietly, takes off his coat and places it across Estragon's shoulders. Then he starts walking up and down, moving his arms briskly to keep himself warm. Estragon wakes with a start, jumps up and searches around wildly. Running to him, Vladimir puts his arms around him.*) There......there...It is only I, Didi......Don't be afraid......

Estragon. Ah !

Vladimir. It is all right, it (*your nightmare*) is all over now.

Estragon. I thought I was falling—

Vladimir. It is over now.

Estragon. I was falling from the top of a—

Vladimir. Don't tell me ! Come along, we will walk about and forget what it was.

He takes Estragon by the arm and makes him walk up and down until he refuses to move any further.

Estragon. That is quite sufficient. I am tired now.

Vladimir. Would you have preferred being stuck there, doing nothing ?

Estragon. Yes.

Vladimir. You can do that now.

He lets Estragon go, takes up his coat and puts it on.

Estragon. Let us leave.

Vladimir. We can't do so.

Estragon. Why can't we ?

Vladimir. Because we are waiting for Godot.

Estragon. Ah ! (*Vladimir walks up and down.*) Can't you stay still ?

Vladimir. I am feeling cold.

Estragon. We came too early.

Vladimir. We always come at nightfall.

Estragon. But night does not fall, yet.

Vladimir. It will, quite suddenly, as it did yesterday.

Estragon. Then it will be night.

Vladimir. Then we will be able to go away.

Estragon. After that it will again be day. (*Pause. Dejectedly.*) What shall we do now, what shall we do ?

Vladimir. (*Stopping and speaking violently*) Will you stop crying ? I am disgusted with your lamentations.

Estragon. I am going.

Vladimir. (*Seeing Lucky's hat*) Well !

Estragon. Farewell !

Vladimir. There is Lucky's hat. (*He goes towards it.*) Although I have been here for an hour, I didn't notice this. (*Very happy.*) This is fine !

Estragon. You will never see me again.

Vladimir. I was sure we were at the right place. Your troubles will be over now. (*He picks up the hat, studies it and tries to make it straight.*) This must have been a very fine hat at one time. (*He replaces his hat with Lucky's, giving his own hat to Estragon.*) Hold it.

Estragon. What ?

Vladimir. Hold this hat.

Estragon takes Vladimir's hat. Vladimir adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Estragon places Vladimir's hat on his head in place of his own which he hands to Vladimir. Vladimir takes Estragon's hat. Estragon adjusts Vladimir's hat on his head. Vladimir then puts on Estragon's hat in place of Lucky's which he hands to Estragon. Estragon takes Lucky's hat. Vladimir adjusts Estragon's hat on his head. Estragon puts on Lucky's hat in place of Vladimir's, handing the latter to Vladimir. Vladimir takes his hat. Estragon adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Vladimir puts on his own hat in place of Estragon's which he hands back to Estragon. Estragon takes back his own hat. Vladimir adjusts his own hat on his head. Estragon puts on his hat in place of Lucky's

which he hands to Vladimir. Vladimir takes Lucky's hat. Estragon adjusts his hat on his head. Vladimir puts on Lucky's hat in place of his own which he once again hands to Estragon. Estragon takes it. Vladimir adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Estragon again hands back Vladimir's hat to him, but the latter returns it to Estragon. Estragon takes it but returns it to Vladimir. The latter takes it but throws it down.

How does it (Lucky's hat) fit me ?

Estragon. How can I know that ?

Vladimir. No, what I mean is how do I look in it ?

He moves his head this way and that like a coquette, moving slowly like a mannequin.

Estragon. You look hideous !

Vladimir. That is right, but do I look more than usually hideous ?

Estragon. There is no difference.

Vladimir. That means I can keep it. My hat irritated me. (*Pause.*) It made my head itch.

He takes off Lucky's hat, looks closely into it, shakes it, knocks on the crown of the hat and puts it on again.

Estragon. I am going now.

Silence.

Vladimir. Won't you play ?

Estragon. Play what ?

Vladimir. We could play at being Pozzo and Lucky.

Estragon. I have never heard of the game.

Vladimir. I'll play the role of Lucky, you play that of Pozzo. (*He imitates Lucky's way of walking, bending under the burden of his baggage. Estragon looks at him dumbfounded.*) Begin.

Estragon. What must I do ?

Vladimir. You are to curse me !

Estragon. (*After thinking*) You are naughty !

Vladimir. Use a stronger oath.

Estragon. You are the germ of Gonorrhoea. You are a Spirochaete (another kind of germ) !

Vladimir moves back and forth, almost bending double.

Vladimir. You must order me to think.

Estragon. Think what ?

Vladimir. Say to me, think, pig !

Estragon. Think, pig !

Silence.

Vladimir. I can't think.

Estragon. That will do.

Vladimir. You must now ask me to dance.

Estragon. I am going.

Vladimir. Dance, pig ! (*He twists awkwardly. Estragon leaves suddenly by the left.*) I can't dance ! (*Looking up, he sees that Estragon is not there.*) Gogo ! (*Moving wildly about the stage. Estragon enters from the left, breathing quickly. He hurries towards Vladimir and falls into his arms.*) You are back, at last !

Estragon. I am wretched.

Vladimir. Where had you gone ? I was afraid you had left for ever.

Estragon. They are coming !

Vladimir. Who ?

Estragon. I don't know who they are.

Vladimir. How many of them are there ?

Estragon. I don't know that.

Vladimir. (*Victoriously*) It must be Godot ! At last he is coming ! Gogo ! It must be Godot ! That means we shall be saved ! Let us go and meet him. (*He pulls Estragon towards the wings. Estragon struggles and at last pulls himself free and leaves from the right.*) Gogo ! Come back ! (*Vladimir runs to the extreme left, looks closely at the sky. Enter Estragon from the right. He hurries towards Vladimir and falls into his arms.*) There you are with me again !

Estragon. I feel that I am in hell.

Vladimir. Where had you gone ?

Estragon. They are coming here too !

Vladimir. We are besieged. (*Estragon rushes towards the back.*) Idiot ! There is no way of eseape there. (*He takes Estragon by the arm and pulls him towards the front. He points towards the front.*) There ! There is no one in sight ! You must leave quickly. (*He pushes Estragon towards the auditorium. Estragon draws back horrified.*) You won't leave ? (*He looks reflectively at the auditorium.*) I can understand your attitude. Wait till I see who they are. (*He thinks deeply.*) The only hope for you now is to vanish.

Estragon. Where can I go ?

Vladimir. You can hide behind the tree. (*Estragon is hesitant.*) Quickly. Go behind the tree. (*Estragon goes and huddles himself behind it, but realizes that the tree cannot hide him. Then he comes out from behind the tree.*) I am certain that this tree will never be of the least use to us.

Estragon. (*Calmly*) I became confused. You must forgive me. I won't do so again. Tell me what I must do now.

Vladimir. There is nothing that we can do.

Estragon. You can go and stand there. (*He drags Vladimir to extreme right and makes him stand with his back to the stage.*) Stand there and don't move. Keep looking out. (*Vladimir watches the horizon, shading his eyes with his hand. Estragon runs and takes up the same position on extreme left. They turn their heads and look at each other.*) We stand back to back as we used to do in the good old days ! (*They continue to look at each other for a little while, then return to watching. There is a long silence.*) Can you see anyone coming ?

Vladimir. (*Turning his head*) What did you ask ?

Estragon. (*Louder*) Do you see anyone coming towards this side ?

Vladimir. No, I can't.

Estragon. I can't either.

They resume watching. Silence.

Vladimir. You must have seen a dream.

Estragon. (*Turning his head*) What did you say ?

Vladimir. (*Louder*) I said you must have sεen a dream.

Estragon. There is no need to shout !

They continue their watch. Silence.

Vladimir.
Estragon.] (*Turning at the same time*) Do you—

Vladimir. Pardon me.

Estragon. Carry on.

Vladimir. No, you first, I'll follow you.

Estragon. No, you must speak first.

Vladimir. It was I who interrupted you.

Estragon. It is just the opposite.

They look angrily at each other.

Vladimir. You are a ceremonious ape !

Estragon. You are a fussy pig !

Vladimir. I tell you, you must finish your sentence.

Estragon. You must finish yours, first.

Silence. They come closer to each other and then stop.

Vladimir. Idiot !

Estragon. That is a fine idea, let us abuse each other.

They turn, move away from each other, turn once again and then face each other.

Vladimir. You are an idiot.

Estragon. You are a pest.

Vladimir. You are a distorted creature.

Estragon. You are a morpion.

Vladimir. You are a drain-rat.

Estragon. You are a priest.

Vladimir. You are a cretin (sufferer from hypothyroidism).

Estragon. (*With finality*) You are a critic !

Vladimir. Oh!

He seems withered and defeated and turns away.

Estragon. Now let us try to achieve a reconciliation.

Vladimir. Gogo!

Estragon. Didi!

Vladimir. Let me have your hand.

Estragon. Here it is.

Vladimir. Let me embrace you.

Estragon. Shall I come into your arms?

Vladimir. Let me hug you to my breast.

Estragon. Here I come.

They embrace and then separate. Silence.

Vladimir. When one is entertained time seems to fly swiftly.

Silence.

Estragon. What are we to do now?

Vladimir. You mean while we wait?

Estragon. Yes, while we wait.

Silence.

Vladimir. We could do our exercises.

Estragon. We could go through our movements.

Vladimir. We could practise our elevations.

Estragon. Also our relaxing postures.

Vladimir. And our elongating exercises.

Estragon. Especially our relaxations.

Vladimir. All this would warm us up.

Estragon. It will also calm us down.

Vladimir. Here we start.

Vladimir jumps from one foot to the other. Estragon does likewise.

Estragon. (*Stopping*) That is quite enough. I am feeling tired.

Vladimir. (*Stopping*) We are not in good form. Shall we try a little deep breathing ?

Estragon. I am tired of breathing.

Vladimir. You are right. (*Pause.*) Let us practise the tree, for the sake of balance.

Estragon. The tree ?

Vladimir does the 'tree', staggering from one foot to the other.

Vladimir. (*Stopping*) It is your turn now.

Estragon practises the same exercise.

Estragon. Do you think God is seeing me ?

Vladimir. You must close your eyes.

Estragon closes his eyes, as a result he staggers even in a worse way than before.

Estragon. (*Stopping, waving his fists about and speaking at the top of his voice*) May God have pity on me !

Vladimir. (*Troubled*) And how about me ?

Estragon. On me, on me only ! Pity on me !

Enter Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo is blind. Lucky is carrying baggage as before. A rope connects the two as before, but the rope is much shorter now, this enables Pozzo to follow Lucky more easily. Lucky is wearing a different hat now. At the sight of Vladimir and Estragon he stops suddenly. Pozzo continues walking and collides with Lucky.

Vladimir. Gogo !

Pozzo. (*Clutches on to Lucky ; the latter staggers*) What is it ? Who is it ?

Lucky falls, drops the baggage and causes Pozzo also to fall. Both of them lie among the scattered things, helpless.

Estragon. Is it Godot who has come ?

Vladimir. He seems to have come at last ! (*Goes towards Pozzo and Lucky who are lying in a heap.*) At last there is help for us.

Pozzo. Help me !

Estragon. Is that Godot ?

Vladimir. We had started becoming demoralised ; now the evening will pass nicely.

Pozzo. Help me !

Estragon. Can you hear him ?

Vladimir. We are no longer lonely, waiting for the night to fall, waiting for Godot to come...just waiting. We have struggled all evening, without any help. Now that is over. It is already tomorrow.

Pozzo. Help !

Vladimir. Already, time is passing very quickly. The sun will set, the moon will rise and we shall go away...from this place.

Pozzo. Take pity on me !

Vladimir. It is poor Pozzo !

Estragon. I was sure it was he.

Vladimir. Who ?

Estragon. Godot.

Vladimir. But he isn't Godot.

Estragon. Are you sure he isn't ?

Vladimir. Yes, I am sure.

Estragon. Who is it then ?

Vladimir. It is Pozzo.

Pozzo. I am here. Help me to get up !

Vladimir. He is unable to get up.

Estragon. Let us leave.

Vladimir. We can't go.

Estragon. Why can't we ?

Vladimir. Because we are waiting for Godot.

Estragon. Ah !

Vladimir. It is possible he has another bone to give you.

Estragon. Bone ?

Vladimir. Chicken bone. Don't you recall ?

Estragon. Was it he who gave me the bone ?

Vladimir. Yes, it was he.

Estragon. Ask him if he has more bones.

Vladimir. Perhaps we should first help him.

Estragon. In what way ?

Vladimir. In getting up.

Estragon. Can't he get up ?

Vladimir. He wants to get up.

Estragon. Then let him get up by himself.

Vladimir. He can't do so.

Estragon. Why can't he ?

Vladimir. I don't know that.

Pozzo becomes contorted, emits a pained cry and beats the ground with his fists.

Estragon. We should ask him for the bone first. If he refuses to give it, we can leave him lying there.

Vladimir. You mean he is at our mercy now ?

Estragon. Yes, that is so.

Vladimir. And we should therefore make our help conditional on certain advantages ?

Estragon. What conditions ?

Vladimir. This seems an intelligent move. But I am afraid of one thing happening.

Pozzo. Help me !

Estragon. What are you afraid of ?

Vladimir. That Lucky might get up and start moving suddenly. Then we'll be beaten.

Estragon. Lucky ? Who's he ?

Vladimir. He is the one who attacked you yesterday.

Estragon. I must tell you that I was beaten not by one but by ten persons.

Vladimir. I mean before that happened ; he was the one who kicked you.

Estragon. Is that person there now ?

Vladimir. Yes, the very man. (*Points towards Lucky.*) Right now he is inactive. But he might become madly furious any moment.

Pozzo. Help !

Estragon. How do you like the idea of the two of us giving him a sound beating ?

Vladimir. You mean we should attack him in his sleep ?

Estragon. Yes, that's what I mean.

Vladimir. Yes, it seems quite a good idea. But could we really do it ? Is he actually asleep ? (*Pause.*) No, the best thing would be for us to take advantage of the fact that Pozzo is calling out for help.

Pozzo. Help !

Vladimir. We should help him—

Estragon. You mean *we* should help *him* ?

Vladimir. In the hope that he would reward us handsomely.

Estragon. And suppose he—

Vladimir. Don't let us waste time in idle talk ! (*Pause. Then forcefully.*) Let us do something, while the opportunity is still there. Our help is not needed everyday. Even now we are not needed as individuals. Others would have done equally well, if not better. The cries for help that are still ringing in our ears are addressed to all mankind, not to us particularly. But at this place and time we constitute the whole of mankind, whether we like this fact or not Let u exploit this in the best way before it becomes too late to do so ! Let us for once become worthy representatives of the foul species, mankind, to which fate has cruelly consigned us. What is your view ? (*Estragon says nothing.*) It is true that when we, with folded arms, consider both sides of the situation, we are as much a credit to our species as any other person. The tiger jumps to the help of his fellows unthinkingly, or just disappears into the dense bushes. But the question is quite different. The question is—what are we doing here ? We are in a very fortunate position in this matter, for we happen to know the answer to this question. That is the one thing which stands out clearly in the midst of all this confusion—we are waiting for the arrival of Godot—

Estragon. Ah !

Pozzo. Help me !

Vladimir. Or, if Godot does not come, we are waiting for the falling of the night. (*Pause.*) We have kept our part of the appointment and that is all that we are expected to do. How many people can boast to have done the same ?

Estragon. Billions of them.

Vladimir. Do you think so ?

Estragon. I don't know.

Vladimir. You may be right in thinking as you do.

Pozzo. Help !

Vladimir. All that I know is that under these conditions time hangs heavy, and we are obliged to help the passage of time with activities which—I do know how to put it—which seem reasonable at first sight, but which ultimately become just a habit. You may argue that we do so in order to prevent the eventuality of our reason giving way. That is no doubt true. But it is very tedious to wander in the immeasureable depths of the endless night. That is the thing over which I sometimes wonder. Do you follow my reasoning ?

Estragon. (*Becoming pithy for once*) All of us are born mad, but some of us continue to remain mad all our lives.

Pozzo. Help, help, I request you !

Estragon. How much would you give us ?

Pozzo. One hundred francs.

Estragon. That is not enough.

Vladimir. I wouldn't go to that extent.

Estragon. Do you think the amount is sufficient.

Vladimir. No, what I mean is that I would not assert that I was mad when I came into the world. However, that is not the real question.

Pozzo. I would give you two hundred.

Vladimir. We are waiting. We feel bored. (*Throwing up his hand.*) No, you must not protest. We are terribly bored, we can't deny it. Good. A means of diversion comes our way, and how do we react to it ? We let it slip through our fingers. Come, let us begin to work. (*He advances towards the heap, but stops in the midst of a long step.*) In a moment everything will disappear and we will be all alone once more, amidst the nothingness.

He thinks hard.

Pozzo. Two hundred francs !

Vladimir. We are coming !

He tries to pull Pozzo to his feet but fails. He tries again, loses his footing and falls. He tries to get up but does not succeed.

Estragon. What has happened to all of you ?

Vladimir. Help !

Estragon. I am going.

Vladimir Don't leave me alone. They will kill me.

Pozzo. Where am I ?

Vladimir. Gogo !

Pozzo. Help !

Vladimir. Help me !

Estragon. I am leaving.

Vladimir. You must help me first ; then we can both leave together.

Estragon. Do you promise ?

Vladimir. I swear to it.

Estragon. Do you also promise that we will never come back to this place ?

Vladimir. No, we will never return.

Estragon. We will go to the Pyrenees.

Vladimir. We'll go wherever you like.

Estragon. I've always wished to wander in the Pyrenees.

Vladimir. Your wish will be realized.

Estragon. (*Drawing back*) Who passed wind ?

Vladimir. It was Pozzo.

Pozzo. I am here ! Take pity on me !

Estragon. It is disgusting.

Vladimir. Quick ! Give me your hand.

Estragon. I am going. (*Pause*.) I am going.

Vladimir. I suppose finally I'll be able to get up without any help. (*He tries to do so but fails*.) At long last.

Estragon. What is wiong with you ?

Vladimir. Go to the Devil !

Estragon. Are you staying there ?

Vladimir. Yes, for the time being.

Estragon. Come on, try to get up ; otherwise you'll catch a chill.

Vladimir. You must not worry about me.

Estragon. Come on, Didi, don't be stupid.

He extends his hand and Vlcdimir hastens to grasp it.

Vladimir. You must pull now.

Estragon pulls, falters and falls. There is a long silence.

Pozzo. Help!

Vladimir. We have arrived for your help.

Pozzo. Who are you?

Vladimir. We are human beings.

Silence.

Estragon. We are on the sweet mother earth.

Vladimir. Can you get up?

Estragon. I don't know.

Vladimir. You can try.

Estragon. Not now, I cannot try right now.

Silence.

Pozzo. What happened?

Vladimir. (*With violence*) Will you stop it? You are a nuisance. You think of nothing but yourself,

Estragon. How about having a little snooze?

Vladimir. Did you hear what he says? He wants to know what happened!

Estragon. You must not mind him but go to sleep.

Silence.

Pozzo. Pity! Pity!

Estragon. (*With a start*) What is it?

Vladimir. Had you fallen asleep?

Estragon. I must have.

Vladimir. This bastard Pozzo is crying for help a gain.

Estragon. Make him stop his crying. Give him a kick in the crotch (middle part).

Vladimir. (*Striking Pozzo*) Will you stop it? You are a crablouse. (*Pozzo pulls himself out with cries of pain and crawls away. He stops, strikes the air blindly and goes on calling for help. Vladimir is supported on his elbow and watches him move away.*) He has moved away. (*Pozzo collapses.*) He is down again.

Estragon. What are we to do now?

Vladimir. Perhaps I could crawl and reach him.

Estragon. Don't leave me alone.

Vladimir. Or I could call out to him.

Estragon. Yes, do that.

Vladimir. Pozzo! (*Silence.*) Pozzo! (*Silence.*) There is no reply.

Estragon. Let us call together.

Estragon.
Vladimir. } Pozzo! Pozzo!

Vladimir. He moved.

Estragon. Are you sure his name is really Pozzo?

Vladimir. (*Frightened*) Mr. Pozzo! Come back! We won't hurt you!

Silence.

Estragon. We might try calling him with other names.

Vladimir. I am afraid he is dying.

Estragon. It would be amusing.

Vladimir. What would be amusing?

Estragon. Trying to call him with other names, one after another. It would help to pass the time. Sooner or later we are bound to hit upon the right name.

Vladimir. I tell you, his name is really Pozzo.

Estragon. We will soon see that. (*He thinks.*) Abel ! Abel !

Pozzo. Help !

Estragon. I have proved right in one guess !

Vladimir. I begin to get tired of this device.

Estragon. Perhaps the other man is called Cain. Cain ! Cain

Pozzo. Help !

Estragon. Being both Abel and Cain, he is all humanity. (*Silence.*) Look at that little cloud.

Vladimir. (*Raising his eyes*) Where is it ?

Estragon. There, at the highest point in the sky.

Vladimir. Well, what of it ? (*Pause.*) What is there so special about this cloud ?

Silence.

Estragon. Now let us move on to some other subject ; I hope you don't mind.

Vladimir. I was just going to suggest the same.

Estragon. But what can we do ?

Vladimir. That is a question !

Silence.

Estragon. Suppose we got up, first of all ?

Vladimir. There is no harm in trying to do so.

They get up.

Estragon. It proved so easy.

Vladimir. It was simply a question of will-power.

Estragon. And what do we do now ?

Pozzo. Help !.

Estragon. Let us go.

Vladimir. We can't go !

Estragon. Why can't we ?

Vladimir. Because we are waiting for Godot.

Estragon. Ah, that's true. (*In despair.*) What will we do, what will we do ?

Pozzo. Help !

Vladimir. What do you think of helping him ?

Estragon. What help does he need ?

Vladimir. He wants to get up.

Estragon. Then why doesn't he do so ?

Vladimir. He wants that we should help him in getting up.

Estragon. Then why don't we help him ? What are we waiting for ?

They help Pozzo to stand up and then release him. He falls down.

Vladimir. We must keep on holding him. (*They get him on his feet again. Pozzo bends in between them, his arms around their necks.*) Are you feeling better ?

Pozzo. Who are you ?

Vladimir. Don't you recognise us ?

Pozzo. I am blind.

Silence.

Estragon. Perhaps he can see into the future.

Vladimir. Since when have you been blind ?

Pozzo. I used to have wonderful sight once—but are you friendly ?

Estragon. (*Laughing noisily*) He wants to know if we are friendly to each other !

Vladimir. No, he means friendly to him.

Estragon. Then, what do we say ?

Vladimir. We have proved by helping him that we are his friends.

Estragon. Exactly. If we had not been friendly to him, would we have helped him ?

Vladimir. We might have, possibly.

Estragon. That is true.

Vladimir. We must not quibble about that now.

Pozzo. You are not robbers ?

Estragon. Robbers ? Do we look like that ?

Vladimir. Damn it, you must remember that the man is blind.

Estragon. That is true, damn it. (*Pause.*) At least he says so.

Pozzo. Don't leave me !

Vladimir. There is no question of our doing so.

Estragon. At least for the moment.

Pozzo. What is the time ?

Vladimir. (*Looking at the sky*) It might be seven o'clock... or eight o'clock...

Estragon. That depends on what time of the year it is.

Pozzo. Is it evening ?

Silence. Vladimir and Estragon look carefully at the sunse

Estragon. The sun is rising.

Vladimir. That is impossible.

Estragon. It could be the dawn.

Vladimir. Don't be foolish. That is the west.

Estragon. How can you be sure ?

Pozzo. (*In agony*) Is it evening ?

Vladimir. In any case, it has not moved.

Estragon. I tell you it is rising.

Pozzo. Why don't you answer my question ?

Estragon. Give us a chance of doing so.

Vladimir. (*In a reassuring way*) It is evening, sir, it is really evening ; night is approaching. My friend here wants me not to believe it, and for a moment, I admit, he made me doubtful. But I have not lived through this long day for nothing, and I assure you the day is at the end of its tricks. (*Pause.*) How do you feel now ?

Estragon. How much longer have we to carry him around ? (*They half release him, but as he falls they catch him again.*) We are not caryatids (supporting pillars) !

Vladimir. If I heard you rightly, you were saying that your sight used to be good.

Pozzo. My sight used to be simply wonderful !

Silence.

Estragon. (*In irritation*) He goes on expanding.

Vladimir. You must leave him alone. You must see that he is remembering the days when he used to be happy. (*Pause.*) *Memoria praeteritorum bonorum* (Memories of good old days)—that must be unpleasant.

Estragon. We can have no idea of that.

Vladimir. Did it happen to you all of a sudden ?

Pozzo. In a way that was simply surprising !

Vladimir. I want to know if it happened to you quite suddenly ?

Pozzo. When I woke one fine morning, I found myself as blind as Fortune is reputed to be. (*Pause.*) Sometimes, I wonder whether I am still asleep.

Vladimir. And when did this happen ?

Pozzo. I don't know.

Vladimir. But as late as yesterday—

Pozzo. Don't ask me questions. The blind have no idea of the passage of time. They can't see the things which denote time.

Vladimir. Imagine that! I would have thought it was just the reverse of what you say.

Estragon. I am going.

Pozzo. Where are we ?

Vladimir. I am unable to name the place.

Pozzo. Is it by any chance a place called the Board ?

Vladimir. I've never heard the name.

Pozzo. What is the place like ?

Vladimir. (*Looking around*) It is not possible to describe it. It does not resemble anything else. There is nothing here except a tree.

Pozzo. Then it is not the Board.

Estragon. (*Bending*) Here is some diversion.

Pozzo. Where is my servant ?

Vladimir. He is somewhere around.

Pozzo. Why does he not answer when I call him ?

Vladimir. I don't know that. He seems to be asleep. Perhaps he is dead.

Pozzo. What exactly happened ?

Estragon. Exactly !

Vladimir. Both of you slipped. (*Pause.*) And fell down.

Pozzo. Go and find out whether he is hurt.

Vladimir. We cannot leave you.

Pozzo. Both of you need not go away at the same time.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) You go and see Lucky.

Estragon. After the way he kicked me ? I would never do so.

Pozzo. Yes, yes, let your friend go, he stinks very badly. (*Silence.*) What is he waiting for ?

Vladimir. What are you waiting for ?

Estragon. I am waiting for Godot.

Silence.

Vladimir. What exactly do you want him to do ?

Pozzo. He should first of all give a pull to the rope ; let him pull as hard as he likes, so long as he does not strangle the fellow. Lucky usually responds to the pulling of the rope. If he doesn't, he should kick him in the face and in his private parts as far as possible.

Vladimir. (*To Estragon*) You see, you need not be afraid of anything. In fact you even get an opportunity of revenging yourself on him.

Estragon. What if he defends himself ?

Pozzo. No, he never defends himself.

Vladimir. If he does, I'll come running to your help.

Estragon. Keep your eyes on me all the time.

He advances towards Lucky.

Vladimir. Before you start, you must ensure yourself that he is still alive. There would be no point in exerting yourself if he is already dead.

Estragon. (*Bending over Lucky*) He is still breathing.

Vladimir. Then have a go at him.

Estragon starts kicking Lucky with a sudden violence. He also goes on abusing him at the same time. But he hurts his own foot and goes away limping and crying out in pain. Lucky moves.

Estragon. Oh, the beast !

He sits down on the mound and tries to take his boot off. He soon gives up the effort and makes ready to sleep, resting his arms on his knees and head on his arms.

Pozzo. What has gone wrong now ?

Vladimir. My friend has hurt himself.

Pozzo. And how is Lucky ?

Vladimir. So it is really that person ?

Pozzo. What do you mean ?

Vladimir. That person is Lucky ?

Pozzo. I don't understand you.

Vladimir. And you are really Pozzo ?

Pozzo. I am certainly Pozzo.

Vladimir. The same Pozzo as yesterday ?

Pozzo. Yesterday ?

Vladimir. We met each other yesterday. (*Silence.*) Don't you remember that ?

Pozzo. I don't remember that I met anyone yesterday. But tomorrow I would not remember that I met anyone today. Therefore you must not depend on me to give you the information.

Vladimir. But—

Pozzo. No more of that. Get up, pig !

Vladimir. You were bringing him to the fair in order to sell him. You talked to us. He danced. He thought. You could see then.

Pozzo. You can believe as you please. Let me go ! (*Vladimir moves away from him.*) Get up !

Lucky gets up and gathers his loads.

Vladimir. Where would you go from this place ?

Pozzo. On. (*Lucky, fully loaded, takes his place in front of Pozzo.*) Whip ! (*Lucky puts all the baggage down, searches for the whip, finds it and puts it into Pozzo's hand. After that he takes up all his burdens.*) Rope !

Lucky puts everything down and puts the end of the rope intc Pozzo's hand and assumes the burdens again.

Vladimir. What is there in the bag ?

Pozzo. Sand. (*He gives a jerk to the rope.*) On !

Vladimir. Don't go yet !

Pozzo. I am going.

Vladimir. What do you do when you fall and there is nobody to help you ?

Pozzo We wait till we can get up. Then we proceed onwards.

Vladimir. Before going away tell Lucky to sing a song.

Pozzo. Who ?

Vladimir. Lucky.

Pozzo. I should ask him to sing ?

Vladimir. Yes, or ask him to think or to recite.

Pozzo. But Lucky is dumb.

Vladimir. Dumb !

Pozzo. Yes, he is dumb, he can't even groan.

Vladimir. Dumb ? Since when has he been dumb ?

Pozzo. (*Suddenly becoming angry*) Will you not stop troubling me with your wretched time ? It is detestable. When, you ask ? It happened one day, is that not enough for you ? It was a day like any other day. One day he became dumb ; one day I became blind. One day we will become deaf. One day we were born ; one day we shall die, the same day, the same second. Is that not enough for you ? (*Becoming calmer.*) They give birth across a grave, the light shines for an instant, then it is dark once more. (*He jerks the rope.*) On !

Pozzo and Lucky leave. Vladimir follows them to the edge of the stage, then looks after them. There is the noise of falling, which Vladimir magnifies by imitating ; this indicates that Lucky and Pozzo have fallen once again. Silence. Vladimir goes towards Estragon, looks at him for a moment and then awakens him by shaking him.

Estragon. (*Makes wild gestures and speaks meaningless words. Finally.*) Why don't you ever let me sleep ?

Vladimir. I felt lonely.

Estragon. I was dreaming that I was happy.

Vladimir. That helped us pass the time.

Estragon. I was dreaming that—

Vladimir. (*Violently*) Don't tell me., (*Silence.*) I wonder whether he is really blind.

Estragon. Blind ? Who ?

Vladimir. I mean Pozzo.

Estragon. Blind ?

Vladimir. He told us that he was blind.

Estragon. So what ?

Vladimir. I think he was able to see us.

Estragon. You only dreamt about it. (*Pause.*) Let's go away. We can't ? I know why not. Are you sure it was not he ?

Vladimir. Who ?

Estragon. Godot ?

Vladimir. Who was Godot ?

Estragon. Pozzo.

Vladimir. Not at all ! (*Becoming less certain.*) Not at all ! (*Still less certain.*) Not at all !

Estragon. I suppose it would be better for me to get up. (*He gets up painfully.*) Ow, Didi !

Vladimir. I don't know any more what to think.

Estragon. My feet ! (*He sits down and tries to take off his boots.*) Help me !

Vladimir. Was I asleep ? While the others suffered ? Or am I asleep at this time ? When I wake up tomorrow, or think that I have woken up, what shall I say about today ? That I waited at this place, along with my friend Estragon, for Godot till night fell ? That Pozzo passed by, along with his carrier, and that he spoke to us ? Perhaps. But how much truth will be there in all that ? (*Estragon, having unsuccessfully struggled with his boots, seems to be falling asleep again.*) He will know nothing. He will only tell me about the blows he received and I will again give him a carrot. (*Pause.*) Humanity is born above a grave, after a difficult delivery. Down in the hole, the gravedigger puts on the forceps lingeringly. There is time for us to grow old. The air rings with our cries. (*He listens.*) But habit makes us dull. (*Looking again at Estragon.*) Someone must be looking at me also ; someone is saying about me also—he is asleep, he knows nothing, let him keep on sleeping. (*Pause.*) What have I been saying ?

He walks excitedly to and fro, finally halts at extreme left and begins to think deeply. The Boy enters from the right. He stops. Silence.

Boy. Mister...(*Vladimir turns.*) Mr. Albert...

Vladimir. The whole thing again ! (*Pause.*) Don't you recognize me ?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir. Wasn't it you who came yesterday ?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir. Are you coming for the first time ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. Do you bring a message from Mr. Godot ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. That he won't come this evening ?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir. But that he will come tomorrow ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. Definitely ?

Boy. That is right, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. Did you meet anyone ?

Boy. No, sir.

Vladimir. Didn't you see...two other (*he hesitates*)...men ?

Boy. I didn't see any one, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. What does Mr. Godot do ? (*Silence.*) Do you hear me ?

Boy. Yes, sir.

Vladimir. Well, what is your answer ?

Boy. He doesn't do anything, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. How is your brother ?

Boy. He is unwell, sir.

Vladimir. Perhaps it was he who came here yesterday.

Boy. I don't know, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. (*Gently*) Does Mr. Godot have a beard ?

Boy. He has one, sir.

Vladimir. Is his beard fair... (*he hesitates*) or black ?

Boy. I think it is white, sir.

Silence.

Vladimir. May Christ have mercy on us !

Silence.

Boy. What answer shall I give to Mr. Godot, sir ?

Vladimir. Tell him...(*he hesitates*)...tell him you saw me and that...(*hesitates again*)...that you saw me. (*Pause. Vladimir advances,*

the Boy draws back. Vladimir stops; the Boy also stops. With sudden violence.) You are certain you saw me? Or would you come tomorrow and tell me that you never saw me?

Silence. Vladimir suddenly jumps forward, the Boy dodges and leaves, running. Silence again. The sun sets and the moon rises. As in Act I, Vladimir stands motionless, his head bowed. Estragon wakes, takes off his boots, gets up with one boot in each hand and goes and puts the boots down in front at the centre of the stage. Then he goes towards Vladimir.

Estragon. What is the matter with you?

Vladimir. Nothing.

Estragon. I am going.

Vladimir. I am also going.

Estragon. Was I asleep for a long time?

Vladimir. I don't know.

Silence.

Estragon. Where shall we go now?

Vladimir. Not very far.

Estragon. Yes, let us go far away from here this time.

Vladimir. We can't do that.

Estragon. Why can't we?

Vladimir. Because we must come back here tomorrow.

Estragon. Why have we to do so?

Vladimir. To come and wait for Godot.

Estragon. Ah! (*Silence.*) You mean he didn't come?

Vladimir. No, he didn't.

Estragon. And now it is too late?

Vladimir. Yes, it is night now.

Estragon. And if we gave up the idea of meeting him? (*Pause.*) How if we dropped the idea of meeting him?

Vladimir. He would give us punishment. (*Silence. He looks at the tree.*) Everything is dead except this tree.

Estragon. (*Looking at the tree*) What is it ?

Vladimir. It is the tree.

Estragon. I know, but what tree ?

Vladimir. I don't know. It might be a willow.

Estragon pulls Vladimir towards the tree. They stand motionless before it. Silence.

Estragon. Why don't we hang ourselves ?

Vladimir. With what ?

Estragon. Don't you have a bit of a rope ?

Vladimir. No, I haven't.

Estragon. Then we can't hang ourselves.

Silence.

Vladimir. Let us go.

Estragon. Wait, there is my belt.

Vladimir. It is not long enough.

Estragon. You could hang on to my legs.

Vladimir. And who would hang on to my legs ?

Estragon. That is true.

Vladimir. All the same, show it to me. (*Estragon loosens the cord which keeps his trousers in place. The trousers, being too big, now fall about his ankles. Both of them look at the cord.*) It might serve in an emergency. But is it strong enough to bear the weight ?

Estragon. We'll soon find that out. Here.

They take one end of the cord and pull it. As the cord breaks they almost fall.

Vladimir. This cord is not even worth a curse.

Silence.

Estragon. You say we must come back tomorrow.

Vladimir. Yes, we must.

Estragon. Then we can bring along a strong piece of rope with us.

Vladimir. Yes, we can.

Silence.

Estragon. Didi.

Vladimir. Yes.

Estragon. It is not possible for me to go on like this.

Vladimir. You only think so.

Estragon. What if we parted ? It might be better for us to do so.

Vladimir. We shall hang ourselves tomorrow. (*Pause.*) Unless, of course, Godot comes.

Estragon. And what do we do if he does come ?

Vladimir. Then we shall be saved.

Vladimir takes off his hat—which is really Lucky's. He looks inside it closely, feels about inside it, shakes it, taps on its crown and then places it on his head again.

Estragon. Well ? Shall we leave now ?

Vladimir. Pull on your trousers first.

Estragon. What did you say ?

Vladimir. Pull on your trousers.

Estragon. You want that I should pull off my trousers ?

Vladimir. No, I want you to pull them ON.

Estragon. (*Realizing that his trousers have come down*) That is true.

He pulls up his trousers.

Vladimir. Are we ready to go now ?

Estragon. Yes, let us go now.

They remain stationary.

CURTAIN

12

Critical Commentary on Waiting for Godot

ACT I

Introductory

Waiting for Godot has a very unusual opening. The bleakness and bareness of the situation in the play is highlighted by the stage directions and the 'scene'. The latter tells us that the setting is a country road. The only stage prop, the only physical landmark is a tree, growing alongside what we are to take as a 'country road'. The setting in time is equally bare—'Evening', even the season, much less the historical period, remains unindicated. The stage direction is equally provocative. One of the characters is discovered sitting on a mound, which does remind one of the ash-heap on which the Biblical Job settles himself. The character, one can surmise on reading, but one could easily infer on seeing the play on the stage, is a tramp. The action he is engaged in the quintessence of the trivial—he is trying, with both his hands, to take off his boots. However, simply because the activity he is engaged in is trivial does not mean that the doer easily succeeds in it. Far from it : the effort exhausts him and he gives it up. Not finally however, he returns to it again and again, till the other character enters.

The Opening Dialogue

Quite naturally, the very first speech of the play is a comment on Estragon's unsuccessful action : "Nothing to be done", he says once again giving up the futile activity of taking off his boots. As can be seen, this statement is a comment on more than Estragon's taking off his boots—'Nothing to be done' is a foreshadowing of the atmosphere of the entire play, in fact a statement, one may even say, of the futility of the human situation on earth. It is in this sense that Vladimir, the other tramp, takes it. He has entered too late to know that Estragon is commenting on his inability to take off his boots. He takes his words in an absolute sense, as a comment on life and the attitude towards it. So he says :

I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle.

Fellow-Tramps

Quite naturally the conversation then turns to the meeting of the fellow-tramps. Vladimir expresses happiness at seeing his friend again. He states that he thought Estragon had left for ever. Estragon observes that he thought as much. He does not appear very much pleased to meet Vladimir, or to find himself the object of his affectionate overtures "Get up till I embrace you", says Vladimir to which the reaction of Estragon is not only cool but curt: "(*Irritably.*) Not now, not now." This exchange of civilities gives place to something more realistic—Vladimir's question as to where Estragon passed the last night. Since Estragon does not ask the same question of Vladimir, we get the impression that he is the more helpless of the two—Vladimir is better able to find a night's lodging than Estragon. However, they are unable to be choosy about where they sleep. Estragon's answer to his friend's question is, "In a ditch". Far from horrifying Vladimir, the answer seems to please him, it evokes 'admiration' in him and he in fact wants to know the location of this place of refuge, no doubt for his own use on the coming night. Vladimir's next question relates to Estragon's usual luck at night; Vladimir seems to hope that it was different this night, but the hope is soon shattered. "And they didn't beat you?" he wants to know. Estragon's reply is chillingly matter-of-fact: "Beat me? Certainly they beat me." In answer to the next question he makes it clear that this beating is something of a daily occurrence. Vladimir evinces a protective attitude, claiming credit for having made his friend's existence possible over the years. However, he is not sure whether it would not have been a much better idea to have ended his own and Estragon's existence years ago, when an easy means of doing so—a jump from the Eiffel Tower—was within their reach. Now they look so seedy that no one would even let them go up the tower.

The Return to the Present

Estragon brings Vladimir sharply back to the present. Instead of blathering about what he did for him in the past, or what both of them rather ought to have done, Estragon prefers him to lend a hand in his present task—that of taking off his boots. Vladimir does not offer to help, but makes a remark which tells us the reason why Estragon is having all this trouble with his boots. He reminds Estragon that he has told him many times that boots must be taken off every day but that he has never heeded his advice. Estragon's boots have, in other words, become stuck to his feet because he has not taken them off for days on end. Later on

we learn that Estragon's feet, no doubt as a consequence of his wearing the boots constantly, stink horribly. Vladimir has his own share of troubles. It seems that he has weak kidneys ; in fact one gets a distinct impression that Vladimir is suffering from a venereal disease. Estragon asks him whether what Vladimir is suffering from hurts him. Vladimir is indignant that his friend should doubt it. Estragon mends matters by advising his friend : "You might button it all the same."

Their Situation

The tramps have to make a long and hopeless wait endurable. There is no 'work' that they can engage themselves in, except Estragon taking off his boots and examining them and his feet, and Vladimir taking off his hat and peering inside it. For the rest, they must employ every resource they have to keep the ball of conversation rolling. They are quite conscious of the nature of their task and from time to time even compliment themselves on the ingenuity which helps them pass the time. They take credit for making a meaningless existence appear to have some sort of significance.

The First Phase

The first phase in their conversation commences with Estragon's eventual success in taking off his boot. As Estragon looks inside the boot to see whether there is something in it which has been hurting him, Vladimir comments that Estragon has been blaming on his boots the fault of his feet. He himself matches Estragon's action by taking off his hat and looking closely in it and thumping on and shaking it as though there was something in it which has been giving him trouble. Nothing falls out, however, either from the boot or from the hat. Vladimir comments that their situation is becoming alarming, and follows up with one of Beckett's favourite Biblical allusions : "One of the thieves was saved." He asks his friend whether it would not have been better for them to have repented ; the latter naturally wants to know what they should have repented of, for they have done nothing. All that they could repent over is having been born, an action in which their consent was at the most implicit. This causes Vladimir to break out into irrepressible mirth, but their situation does not admit of it. Vladimir cannot, must not, laugh, for the activity causes him unbearable pain in the pubic region. He tempers his laugh to a smile, but that is not the same thing. He then dejectedly repeats the opening sentence of the play : "Nothing to be done." He tries to get his friend interested in the Biblical story to which he has made a reference but does not succeed to any appreciable extent. Estragon has had a look at the Bible, but all that he remembers of it is the maps of the Holy Land, in which the colour of the Dead Sea was such an appealing shade of pale blue that it made him feel thirsty.

He adds that he made up his mind to go to that country for their honeymoon. He does not say whether he ever married but there is an implication that he did not. Vladimir points attention to the fact that Estragon is waxing poetic, and the latter accepts this in his own way :

> *Vladimir.* You should have been a poet.
>
> *Estragon.* I was. (*Gesture towards his rags.*) Isn't that obvious ?

Reality Again

It is Vladimir who this time brings the conversation back to the actual present. He asks Estragon how his foot is. Estragon replies that it is swelling visibly. However, Vladimir is no more than politely interested in the state of Estragon's foot ; what interests him much more is their common problem—how to pass the time. As a means to this he tries once again to interest his friend in the Biblical story about the two thieves. It fills him with wonder to see that out of the four Evangelists who give an almost eye-witness account of the Crucifixion only one records that out of the two criminals one was saved and the other condemned to everlasting death. Estragon is able to make him confused about the different implications of being saved and being condemned. The thieves wanted to be saved from execution. Christ saved one of them from being damned and the other was consigned to hell. Neither of them, however, was saved from being executed. Estragon listens to the story with the poorest grace, and at one stage even rudely threatens to leave.

The Mutual Game

It soon becomes clear that this conversation is only a mutual game which is being played not for itself and for whatever diversion (there seems pretty little of it) that it affords, but only because it enables them to pass the time. Vladimir makes a desperate appeal to Estragon to do his part in this continually taxing game and Estragon makes a handsome response :

> *Vladimir.* Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way ?
>
> *Estragon.* (*With exaggerated enthusiasm*). I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.

Later, however, he returns to his favourite game of nettling and confounding Vladimir.

Next Phase

The Biblical vein having run out, another phase in the conversational game begins. The ball is this time set rolling by

Estragon. "Charming spot", he remarks, and adds, facing the auditorium, "Inspiring prospects". He brings out the ironical nature of his praise of the spot and the prospect by proposing, immediately afterwards, "Let's go". This begins a ritual in their conversation which is repeated many times, every time in more or less the same words :

Estragon. Let's go.

Vladimir. We can't.

Estragon. Why not ?

Vladimir. We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon. (*Despairingly*). Ah !

Estragon's Tactics

Vladimir is sure and clear-minded. Estragon is, or pretends to be, the sceptic. Almost every time, he succeeds in shaking Vladimir's certitude through relentless questioning and objecting. He doubts whether they are waiting for Godot at the right place. He doubts if they have come on the right day. He in fact suggests that they were perhaps expected on the previous day, and that Godot might have actually come in their absence. Vladimir has even to remark : "You are merciless." His confidence is shaken and he protests that one can be certain of nothing when Estragon is near. Vladimir is right, for Estragon does not even agree with his friend about what day of the week it is.

Estragon's Nap

The flow of conversation is broken for a few moments when Estragon goes to sleep. He does so after expressly taking his friend's permission that they should discontinue their conversation for a minute. Vladimir soon shakes him into wakefulness. Estragon takes some time to wake up, and more time to be restored to the full horror of their situation. His first reaction is to blame his friend for interrupting his blissful sleep. He complains that he was having a dream when his friend woke him up. He insists on telling this dream to Vladimir but the latter resists violently : he does not want to hear Estragon's dream. Estragon's comment on this is biting :

Estragon I dreamt that—

Vladimir. DON'T TELL ME !

Estragon. (*Gesture towards the universe*). This one is enough for you ? (*Silence.*) It is not nice of you, Didi.

If Vladimir would not hear Estragon's dream, he must hear at least an anecdote that Estragon desperately wants to tell. It is about an Englishman who, being more than usually drunk, visited a brothel and

was faced with the question of making a choice between a fair harlot, a dark one and a red-haired one. The joke seems to be a hackneyed one, for Estragon asks his friend to tell the rest of it. Vladimir, however, is too disgusted to oblige and the anecdote remains only half-told.

The Tree

Estragon makes a new suggestion about what they might do while they wait for Godot. His proposal is that they might hang themselves, and an argument in favour of this mode of committing suicide that he offers is that it would give them an erection and provide an orgasm. Vladimir is intensely excited to hear this and demands that they should hang themselves immediately. The question now is what they should hang themselves from. The suitability of the tree before them is discussed and the conclusion is that the tree is too weak for any of its boughs to bear their weight. Finally Vladimir suggests that they might wait and see what Godot has to offer them ; they can always hang themselves afterwards if there is need.

Expectations From Godot

One is curious to know what the tramps are expecting Godot to do for them. Vladimir expresses this curiosity of the reader. In the discussion between the tramps it emerges that they are living in a fool's paradise : even if Godot comes, it would not mean the end of their miseries. In fact they have not asked Godot to do anything precise and concrete for them. It was no more than a vague supplication or prayer that they made to him and his reply had been equally vague. He did not even definitely promise that he would come and meet them but only said that he might do so. His reply to them would depend on a series of consultations and calculations—he would think over their request in the privacy and leisure of his house and consult his friends, his family, his correspondents, his account-books and his bank balance. The tramps do not think this procedure to be in any way unusual. They are absolutely at his mercy. Estragon thinks that they still have some rights and privileges but Vladimir is definite that they have surrendered all their rights. They grotesquely consider whether they are in any way tied to Godot. Reality obtrudes on Estragon in the shape of hunger. A carrot is all he can have for food, for the only other thing is turnips which he does not like. The carrot appears to Estragon to be more and more unappetising as he goes on eating it. Vladimir says that it is just the reverse with him : he gets used to the muck as he goes along. Estragon shrewdly asks him whether that is really the opposite of his distaste for the thing.

Pozzo and Lucky

The monotony of the tramps' position is broken by the arrival of two strangers—Pozzo and Lucky. The former is the landlord

and the latter is the slave who is led on a rope and carries an assortment of baggage all the time. Estragon takes the newcomer for Godot but is soon disillusioned. Pozzo takes a meal of chicken and wine before them and givès to Estragon, at his asking, the sucked bones. Vladimir expresses resentment at the cruel treatment of the slave, but Pozzo pleads that Lucky is vicious by nature and does not deserve to be treated more mildly. He announces that he is taking the slave to a fair to sell him, though something much better would be to kill him. At this Lucky begins to cry. This arouses the sympathy of the tramps. Estragon goes to wipe Lucky's tears but is convulsed with pain when the slave gives him a mighty kick in the shins.

The Entertainment

Pozzo answers Estragon's question as to why Lucky does not put down his bags, in a very pompous and showy manner. He almost tells them to praise his little speech and they oblige. Pozzo then announces that he is going to reward them for their courtesy. Estragon begins to expect a monetary reward but Pozzo makes it clear that he only means to provide them some entertainment by asking his slave to dance, recite or think, as they choose. The tramps settle for dancing followed by thinking. Lucky contorts his body in a sort of movement which Pozzo explains as the Dance of the Net. Then Pozzo orders Lucky to 'think' aloud and Lucky does so.

The 'Thinking'

Pozzo makes a long speech which is delivered in the manner a robot. It has no punctuation of any kind. It begins as though in mid-sentence. Many words, phrases and sentences are repeated. Several of the words are stammered out. Yet the speech does have sense. It hauntingly speaks of the cruelty and hopelessness of the human lot in spite of the outward progress that man has achieved. One of the most haunting images which he uses in the later part of his harangue is that of the skull at Connemara and the stones. None of the three listeners can stand the speech and they almost choke it out of him. The close of Lucky's speech is powerfully moving :

> ...alas alas on on in short in fine on on abode of stones who can doubt it I resume but not so fast I resume the skull to shrink and waste and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labours abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard (*melee, final vociferations*)...tennis...the stones...so calm...Cunard...unfinished...

End of the Evening

It is the last part of the evening now. Pozzo and Lucky have helped them beguile a substantial part of the period of waiting. Estragon and Vladimir must now once again fall back upon their conversational resources. This time they are much more self-conscious about it. It is Estragon who expresses the view that they must engage in 'conversation' just for the sake of passing time. If Vladimir puts a question he takes it as a game and says, "That's the idea. Let us ask each other questions." If he contradicts him, or abuses him, Estragon uses the same formula. This goes on till the Boy arrives to tell them that Godot has sent word that he won't be coming that evening but they can certainly expect him the next evening. The evening's task is over, they are now free to go away. Estragon decides to leave his boots behind him. They are, he says, too tight for him. He dismisses his friend's objection to his walking barefooted by reminding him that that's what Christ did. There is a little more reminiscing about the days when Vladimir used to harvest grapes. Estragon is once again tempted to try hanging but regrets that they have no rope with which to do so. He asks Vladimir to remind him to bring a length of rope with him the next day. They once again toy with the idea of parting from each other, only to reject it—it is no longer worth while. Estragon proposes : "Well, shall we go ?" Vladimir assents, saying : "Yes, let's go." Yet, when the curtain comes down they are still standing there, unmoving. In the world of *Waiting for Godot* even such a trivial and negative action as that of going away in disgust and helplessness is not permitted.

ACT II

Introductory

The first question that crosses our mind when we see a new scene or act in a play is the change in setting and the amount of time that has elapsed. This question is all the more important in a play like *Waiting for Godot* where there are only two acts and there is no sub-division into scenes. The author tells us that one day has elapsed between the two acts, for the legend after Act II is 'Next Day'. The time of the day is stated to be the 'same'. The setting also is announced as being the 'same place'. The stage direction just before the act opens informs us that there are only three differences in this act from the way the first act opened. In the first act it was Estragon who was on the stage and Vladimir who ma de his entry afterwards. This time the situation is reversed. Vladimir s already on the stage and Estragon comes later. The stage was empty in the first act. In this act Estragon's boots occupy the centre of the front part of the stage. The only significant change is in the tree : four or five leaves have sprouted on it. This fact seems to belie the

earlier announcement that only one day has elapsed between the two acts. There are several other indications in Act II which make it difficult to believe that the time is 'the next day'.

The Song

Act I began with a complaint of Estragon about his boots, in fact about his failure to take them off. This Act begins with a song, though it is a rather depressing song, quite in keeping with the situation of the tramps. It is a song about a dog who stole a crust of bread and was beaten to death by the cook in consequence. Vladimir is singing this song to himself; the aim appears to be that of passing the time. There are several matter-of-fact touches about the song. For one thing, Vladimir begins on too high a note and has to bring it down and begin singing anew. Secondly, he halts and apparently recollects the rest of the song a number of times and then resumes.

Off-Stage Action

As in Act I Estragon reports a part of the action which is supposed to have taken place off-stage. He seems to be quite exhausted. He was, he relates, beaten by ten people last night. He protests that he was not doing anything. Vladimir wishes to establish the point that even in doing nothing the way how one does it matters, and claims that if he had been nearby he would have saved his friend from being beaten.

The Waiting-Game

The waiting-game is now begun in right earnest. Vladimir suggests that they must pretend to be happy. Estragon wants to know what he should be happy about. Vladimir's reply is that any pretext would do—or even the absence of a pretext. He wants his friend just to chant 'I am happy' and he himself follows suit. Then they both chant one after the other: "We are happy." Estragon undercuts the game by a sarcastic remark which brings them back to their present situation:

> *Estragon.* What do we do now, now that we are happy?
>
> *Vladimir.* Wait for Godot. (*Estragon groans. Silence.*)

Estragon's Objections

Estragon's variant of the game is to question not only the make-believe which Vladimir proposes but also to call in question what seems to be the explicit situation. In the first act he had asked Vladimir if the name of the person they were waiting for was indeed Godot. He had also questioned whether they were waiting at the right place or on the right day. Now he seems to have forgotten that they were at this place yesterday. He refuses to acknowledge

that he recognises the place. Much time is taken up with Vladimir's determined efforts to convince his friend that they were waiting at the same place for Godot on the previous evening, but Estragon does not budge from his point. Vladimir's trump card is the presence of Estragon's boots on the stage, but Estragon is able to demolish this argument very easily. He claims that the boots are of a different shade than his. Moreover, as he tries them on, at Vladimir's insistence, they fit him, and so, he claims that they are not at all his boots. Vladimir is greatly exasperated by the failure of his industrious efforts to convince his friend. He consoles himself with the argument that some other person came there in their absence, took up Estragon's boots because they fitted him better than his own and left his own back. Vladimir then tries to remind Estragon about Lucky and Pozzo. Estragon seems to have forgotten everything, except that someone kicked his shins away and another person gave him a chicken bone. He very much doubts, however, that all this took place on the previous evening. In view of the growing of the leaves on the tree and the blindness of Pozzo and the dumbness of Lucky, the reader also feels that the stage direction about the time being 'the next day' is hard to believe.

Poetic Exchange

In sharp contrast with the banal exchange of words in the first act, a breath of poetry blows through the play in a part of the second act. Estragon observes that they are quite deft in conversation and must therefore pass their time in talking. Vladimir seconds him, saying that they are inexhaustible talkers. Estragon adds that they talk so as to escape thinking. Moreover, talking saves them from hearing the voices. It is then that there is a bit of the dialogue which reads almost like pure poetry :

Estragon. All the dead voices.

Vladimir. They make a noise like wings.

Estragon. Like leaves.

Vladimir. Like sand.

Estragon. Like leaves......

Vladimir. What do they say ?

Estragon. They talk about their lives.

Vladimir. To have lived is not enough for them.

Estragon. They have to talk about it.

Vladimir. To be dead is not enough for them.

Estragon. It is not sufficient.

Symbolic Touches

There are several touches in Act II which appear to be symbolic. Estragon and Vladimir put on and off, in quick succession, the three hats, Lucky's, Estragon's and Vladimir's. All the hats are of the same type—a footnote tells us that all the persons are wearing bowler hats. Since every hat fits Estragon and Vladimir, it means that they are symbolic of Everyman. The time they take in exchanging one bowler hat for another seems to represent the meaninglessness and triviality of most activities in life. Waiting for Godot appears to be symbolic of humanity's fruitless wait for some divine Saviour. Even Pozzo has no fixed or specific identity, for he answers whether he is called by the name 'Abel' or by its antithesis 'Cain'. Pozzo makes a devastating criticism of the idea of time—one day is quite like another, there is no difference between the day we were born or the day we would die. Human life is not only brief but extremely painful. As he says :

> Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you...They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.

Vladimir's Soliloquy

As in Act I, the monotony of the tramps' conversation is interrupted by Estragon going to sleep. In the meanwhile Vladimir soliloquises and his words seem to be full of deep significance. Vladimir repeats some of the words of Pozzo but changes them in such a way that they appear to acquire greater significance :

> Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries.

These words of Vladimir are followed by some that are quite mysterious : "At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on." It is as though Vladimir had suddenly turned a religious mystic.

Second Message

A boy brings another message from Godot. Either he really is the brother of the boy who acts as messenger in Act I, or he also seems to have fallen a victim to the disease of forgetfulness which has earlier attacked Estragon. As though knowing what the message is, Vladimir speaks it out in advance, and the boy has only to confirm that that is really the message—once again, Godot would not be coming that evening, but they may definitely expect him the next evening. Vladimir is able to get some information about

Godot from the boy, and all of it is of a very puzzling nature. Godot 'does nothing'—rather strange for a man who has correspondents, account-books and bank balances to consult before helping two tramps. Vladimir insists on knowing the colour of Godot's beard and the information that it is white greatly dismays him. Vladimir is almost certain that the next day the same boy will deny having seen them.

The Last Phase

Estragon has been blissfully asleep most of the time. He therefore knows nothing about the coming of the boy. By force of habit he tells Vladimir, "I am going", expecting that the latter would dissuade him. He does not know that there is no reason for them to keep on waiting any longer. It is only when Vladimir says that they cannot go very far because they must come back and wait for Godot the next day that he realizes what has happened. Once again Estragon suggests rebellion—why not drop Godot? But Vladimir is more cautious—they must not forget the punishment they would get if they dared defy Godot.

The Way Out

Estragon does not contradict his friend. However, he recurs to the plan of suicide, once again suggesting that they take the chance of hanging themselves from a bough of the tree. They still do not have a piece of rope but Estragon offers a substitute—the cord with which he holds his trousers in place. A touch of grim comedy enters the serious situation when Estragon's trousers drop to his ankles as he removes the cord and the two tramps test its strength. The cord breaks - it is no good for hanging—perhaps no good even as a belt for the trousers now. Estragon consoles himself with the suggestion that they should bring a piece of rope with them the next day.

Final 'Non-Action'

Although the situation of the tramps is pretty hopeless, with even the means of committing suicide definitely out of their reach, they are forced to cling to some illusory consolation. This is more evident in Vladimir, who even now tells Estragon that if Godot comes the next day they will be saved. Estragon makes another impracticable suggestion—they might part from each other. For the last time, Vladimir indulges in a madly trivial ritual with Lucky's hat. He brings Estragon to earth by reminding him that he must pull up his trousers. The two make ready to go, yet there is no sign of their moving away as the curtain comes down. The 'non-action' in Act II thus ends exactly as it had done at the end of Act I.

Conclusion

Thus both Act I and Act II emphasize the theme of waiting itself, with those who wait, and the person for whom they are waiting, being made of subsidiary interest. Waiting is synonymous not only with the boredom and triviality of much of modern life, but also with its lack of purpose and meaning. Not only is waiting tedious, but what is being awaited is indefinite and uncertain, and, if it at all materializes, it does not seem to be worth waiting for. On the symbolic level the waiting stands for the futile hope for salvation.

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Major Themes of Waiting for Godot

Introductory

In addition to the themes implicit in the title itself, that is, the theme of waiting, with all its ramifications, and that of a mysterious and dreaded saviour, there are several other themes in *Waiting for Godot* which have captured critical attention. Some of these are—the theme of the triviality and boredom of human life, the theme of the prevalence of suffering, the theme of ignorance, the theme of economic and intellectual exploitation and the theme of the meaninglessness of space, time and identity. For a proper understanding of the meaning of this play, it is necessary to know the working out of all these themes.

The Theme of Waiting

Many critics say that waiting is itself the theme of the play. Some even go to the extent of saying that this is not a play *about* waiting, but is in itself waiting. There is a lot in this view, for not only does the reader wait, with Estragon and Vladimir, for the arrival of the mysterious Godot, he also waits breathlessly and futilely for something to happen. Waiting conditions everything in this play. It is to lighten the tedium of endless waiting that the tramps resort to various devices to pass the time. This waiting is compulsive—Estragon suggests more than once that they might leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they dare not—they are waiting for Godot. Estragon agrees, although reluctantly, every time. The various attitudes of the tramps enhance this theme, for example going to one edge and then to the other of the stage and looking into the distance, with the eyes shielded by the hand. They also tell worn-out jokes and anecdotes to each other. They indulge in repetitive, pointless activities. Each act ends with a respite in waiting, but it is made clear that waiting must go on the next day and then the next, until Godot comes, of which they do not seem to harbour any real hope.

Waiting for Godot

The theme of waiting, in the abstract, combines with that of waiting for a mysterious stranger, which has obvious symbolic dimensions and implications. Godot may be a representative in Beckett's contemporary terms, of some authority who has promised protection to the tramps who may be regarded as symbolic of the ordinary French citizen in France under the German occupation. Or he may be considered a link in the Resistance movement, with Estragon and Vladimir two Resistance workers who have been told to contact him. Obviously, their man can come only when the coast is absolutely clear. Or waiting for Godot may be a symbol of man's waiting for a Divine Saviour, a wait that, obviously, must go on and on. This view is strengthened by the fact that the tramps admit that they did not request Godot to do anything definite for them—all that they did was to make a sort of vague prayer or supplication to him. Vladimir says more than once that if Godot comes they would be saved. The resemblance between 'God' and 'Godot' is too clear to be missed. Moreover, the tramps are also *afraid* of Godot. When Estragon suggests that they might drop Godot, Vladimir reminds him that he would punish them if they do that. Thus the action of waiting for Godot becomes applicable to all Christianity.

The Meaninglessness of Life

The way the two tramps pass time is indicative of the boredom and triviality of human activities, the lack of significance in life and the constant suffering which existence is. It also brings out the hollowness and insincerity of most social intercourse. Estragon and Vladimir question each other, contradict each other, abuse each other, become reconciled to each other without any serious meaning or intention. All these devices are employed to one end—to the end of making their waiting for Godot less unbearable. Estragon takes off his boots, gropes inside them, and shakes them out expecting something to fall out of them, but nothing happens. Vladimir does the same with his hat, with the same result. The very essence of boredom and triviality is concentrated in the scene in which Estragon and Vladimir repeatedly put on and take off the three hats, their own and Lucky's. It is this utter lack of meaning which drives Estragon and Vladimir to thoughts of suicide, but the world of this play is one in which no significant action is permitted ; therefore even suicide is not within their reach. In addition to trivial actions, the only other that are permitted are cruel ones, like that of beating Pozzo and Lucky.

The Theme of Suffering

One of the themes of *Waiting for Godot* is that suffering is an inseparable part of the human condition. Vladimir and Estragon

suffer intensely and incessantly. Vladimir cannot even laugh without suffering excruciating pain. Estragon's feet make life a long torture for him. They have nowhere to rest their head. On top of this, Estragon is beaten daily by some gang of ruffians, without his providing them any sort of provocation. They have nothing to eat either, except carrots, turnips and radishes. Vladimir pretends to like this muck as he eats it, but Estragon is frank enough to confess that it becomes more and more unbearable as he takes it. They have nothing to look back on except the days when they did not look so shabby that they could go up Eiffel Tower and jump to their deaths from there. Even those days were far from happy otherwise, for Estragon even then tried putting an end to his life by jumping into the Rhone but Vladimir fished him out. Estragon wistfully recollects that he once planned to go to the Holy Land for his honeymoon because he was enchanted by the colour of the Dead Sea as shown in maps of the Holy Land in an edition of the Bible. The hopeless ordeal of waiting for Godot, and the desperate devices which must be employed to make time pass, are nerve-racking. Each day appears to end like its predecessor, with a message that Godot won't be able to visit them that evening but would surely do so the next day. This suffering pervades the episode of Lucky and Pozzo also. Lucky gives expression to the human condition by dancing what he styles the Dance of the Net. In Act II both Lucky and Pozzo have suffered great physical affliction. The enslaved and chained Lucky has now been rendered dumb also. Pozzo, who led him on a rope in Act I can no longer be regarded as master. Although he still abuses Lucky and calls him 'pig' and orders him about, in reality, being blind, he is absolutely at Lucky's mercy. It is Pozzo who expresses the misery of the human lot in the striking metaphor of the birth astride a grave. And the worst of it is that the suffering is both purposeless and without the consolation of a hoped-for end. A theme related to that of suffering is the one of ignorance and the untrustworthiness of memory. Estragon is asleep while the second boy tells Vladimir that Godot would not come that evening. Vladimir wonders whether he would be able to tell himself convincingly the next day that what is happening right now is a reality :

> Was I sleeping, while the others suffered ? Am I sleeping now ? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today ? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot ? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us ? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be ?... He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot.

In Act I Estragon is unable to recognize the place as one they have already visited. He says so again in Act II. He is unable to recall Lucky and Pozzo, or insists that the meeting with them took

place in the remote past and not yesterday as Vladimir claims. Pozzo does not remember that he has met Estragon and Vladimir already. He shows frank incredulity when Vladimir states that he and Lucky met them the previous day, that he gave chicken bones to Estragon and that Lucky danced and thought for them. On the other hand, he says that he became blind all of a sudden one day and that Lucky became dumb in the same manner. Vladimir thinks that the second boy is the same as the first. He seems satisfied by the thought that it might be the brother of the boy of the First Act, but his suspicions are greatly aroused. He asks the boy sternly whether he would claim the next day that he did not meet them or talked to them the previous day. In some profounder, non-rational sense, everyone is ignorant to some extent. He believes that someone who has a better view of things may know that Vladimir also is asleep when he claims to be awake and conscious : "At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on."

The Theme of Exploitation

The theme of exploitation is only implicit in the main story but it is explicit in the episode of Pozzo and Lucky. All the fine words Pozzo now speaks are derived, he confesses, from Lucky. Yet he holds Lucky on a rope and treats him worse than an animal. Lucky has been so debased by the cruel treatment that he gives a vicious kick to Estragon whose only fault is that he sympathises with him and tries to wipe away his tears. Now, having derived from Lucky all that he had to give, Pozzo is planning to sell him at a fair, though it is his belief that a much better thing would be to kill him outright. It is characteristic of the haves that they employ the have-nots even to do their thinking for them. The 'Net' in which Lucky believes himself to be caught is an economic one. The exploited become so demoralised that they are unable to offer any resistance to the exploiters. Pozzo states that it was just once that Lucky failed to obey a command of his. Even when Pozzo has become blinded, Lucky does not have the guts to free himself from his enslavement.

Conclusion

Waiting for Godot is a many-faceted play. Its meaning and implications are complex. It is possible to look upon it as a clever farce, or view it as a tragic exposition of the human predicament. Its themes have a certain topicality, at the same time as they possess a timeless validity and universality. It is an Existentialist play ; at the same time it also mocks at the attitudes of Existentialism. It seems to have some religious implications even though it seems to question profoundly the Christian conception of salvation and grace. Not only are Estragon and Vladimir the representatives of common humanity but even Pozzo and Lucky are so. The passage from Act I to Act II gives a threefold treatment of the movement of time. To

the tramps it appears that everything has changed except they themselves. The only real change is in the tree, on which a few leaves have now sprouted in the interval, if we are to believe the dramatist, of only twenty-four hours. Estragon and Vladimir are the same as they were in Act I. Quite mysteriously, Estragon's boots and Lucky's hat have undergone a transformation. If nature has progressed from winter to spring, Pozzo and Lucky seem to have suffered a decline which is just the reverse of it. Thus the themes of *Waiting for Godot* possess an inexhaustible richness of meaning and implication. The play ends on a strange note of hope—hope that the tramps would be able to come by a piece of rope with which to hang themselves the next day.

14

Parallelism and Contrast in Waiting for Godot Or *The Structure of Waiting for Godot*

Introductory

Waiting for Godot is a play to which traditional ideas of plot, action, structure etc. do not apply. To a certain extent Beckett has deliberately discarded or even parodied such conventions. At first sight it may seem that *Waiting for Godot* is a completely formless play, which has not been constructed on any structural principles. A more careful look at the play would tell us that this impression is quite erroneous. Far from being a carelessly constructed play, *Waiting for Godot* is meticulous from the structural point of view. The structural devices can be seen in dialogue, chracterisation and bringing out of the themes. The major structural devices are parallelism and contrast, which at places take the form of a ritual. The two acts are a bold experiment in the use of parallelism which is saved from monotony by an admixture of contrast.

The Essence of the Structure

The essential structural principle of *Waiting for Godot* is the theme of tiresome waiting which has to be made less tedious by all the means that are available. The devices that are employed to make time hang less heavy all fall into a structural pattern. In each act Vladimir asks Estragon how he spent the night, In each act Vladimir offers to embrace Estragon and the latter does not at first take kindly to this gesture. Every now and then, Estragon says that they should go ; Vladimir patiently says they cannot. Estragon wants to know why not, and Vladimir replies that they must wait for Godot. This is followed every time by a sigh from Estragon. The conversation itself takes a rhythmic course. There are anecdotes

and incidents, agreements and contradictions, questions and meaningless observations. In each act there is a time when the conversation flags and Estragon asks to be allowed to sleep. Similarly, in each act the tramps, when they are at their wits' ends for conversation, indulge in meaningless trivialities which have the passing of time as their only motive. In each act the tramps are helped at a particularly tedious moment of their waiting by the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky. In each act, when they feel that their situation is absolutely unbearable, they toy with the idea of committing suicide, but in each case there is a major hurdle in their way. Each time they console themselves with the thought that they will bring a piece of rope the next day with which they will commit suicide if Godot does not come. Recognition and forgetfulness also act as structural principles in each case and are thus employed in both the acts. In each act the tramps wrongly take the arrival of somebody else to be that of Godot. The wait is terminated in each case by the arrival of a messenger. Before finally going away, the tramps once again think in each act, of committing suicide. In each case the tramps finally say that they are leaving but are seen to be standing stationary when the curtain comes down.

Rhythm in the Dialogue

The rhythmic pattern in the dialogue not only divides the play into several phases but gives it a structural pattern. In the beginning of Act I Vladimir asks Estragon about his foot and Estragon in turn asks Vladimir about his kidney trouble. Each of them is offended that the other should think it necessary whether the trouble hurts. Vladimir wants to relate to Estragon an incident in the New Testament, for hearing which Estragon is obviously uninterested. Estragon, in turn, wants to relate an anecdote about an Englishman which Vladimir is not prepared to hear. Ultimately, Vladimir has almost to request Estragon to pretend to take interest in his conversation, and the latter does so in a very exaggerated manner. Later, Pozzo does the same with Estragon and Vladimir and they also affect a pretended enthusiasm for the speech he has made :

Pozzo : How did you find me ? (*Vladimir and Estragon look at him blankly.*) Good ? Fair ? Middling ? Poor ? Positively bad ?

Vladimir : (*First to understand.*) Oh very good, very very good.

Pozzo : (*To Estragon.*) And you, sir ?

Estragon : **Oh tray bong, tray tray tray bong.**

Pozzo : (*Fervently*). Bless you, gentlemen, bless you ! (*Pause.*) I have such need of encouragement !

Vladimir wakes Estragon up in Act I, to the great resentment of the latter. He says that he did so because he was feeling lonely. Estragon wakes up with a start. He has been having a dream which he unsuccessfully tries to relate to Estragon :

Estragon : I had a dream.

Vladimir : Don't tell me !

Estragon : I dreamt that—

Vladimir : DON'T TELL ME. !

Estragon : (*Gesture towards the universe*). This one is enough for you ? (*Silence.*) It's not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you ?

Vladimir : Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

In Act II the situation recurs in almost the same way : Estragon once again wakes up with a start, jumps up and moves his arms wildly around him. Once again he has had a dream. Although Vladimir comforts him, he is still unprepared to hear his dream ;

Vladimir : There...there...it's all over.

Estragon : I was falling—

Vladimir : It's all over, it's all over..

Estragon : I was on top of a—

Vladimir : Don't tell me !

Repetition of Themes and Incidents

The play also gains structural cohesion because of the rhythmic repetition of certain themes, incidents and situations. In both Act I and Act II Vladimir asks Estragon whether he recognises the place. Each time Estragon's memory fails. Moreover, on both occasions he seems to make a deliberate attempt to confuse Vladimir and disturb his orientation of time and place. We find the same thing happening in the episode of Pozzo also. In Act II Pozzo is unable

to recollect that he met Estragon and Vladimir on the previous day. Like Estragon, Pozzo also disbelieves the common notions of time and place. In each act there are two occasions on which the tramps think of committing suicide but give up the idea because of some snag.

Paralleiism and Contrast in Character

One aspect of the structure of the play is parallelism and contrast. Estragon and Vladimir are both tramps who are facing a common situation of bored waiting. Yet there are significant differences in their characters and temperaments. Estragon is weaker and more temperamental, whereas Vladimir is strong, protective and clear-headed. At crucial times Estragon goes to sleep ; he blames Vladimir for part of his troubles, but the latter is, on the whole, quite tolerant. Vladimir has greater control over himself than Estragon. We observe a similar character contrast between Pozzo and Lucky also. Some critics claim to see a cross-parallelism between Pozzo-Lucky and Estragon-Vladimir also.

The Two Acts

There is a significant structural link between the two acts. On the whole the events and situations of Act I are neatly repeated in Act II. However, if this were done in an identical manner, it would not only have looked quite odd and redundant but also become monotonous. As it is, there are some variations in the Second Act. For one thing, although the time and place are the same, a significant change has occurred in the tree on which four or five leaves have now sprouted. The tramps, of course, are very much what they were in Act I ; but Pozzo and Lucky have changed. Pozzo has gone blind and Lucky is now dumb. Thus there can be no counterpart to Lucky's harangue in Act I. With the loss of eyesight Pozzo seems to have become poetic. The boy of Act II claims to be different from the boy who brought Godot's message in Act I. Although in both acts the tramps explore the idea of committing suicide, in Act I they think mainly of the strength of the tree, whether or not its bough would be able to bear their weight. In Act II they seem to be prepared to trust the bough on that account ; the crux is now the strength of the cord with which they are to hang themselves. This time the question is put to the actual test rather than decided on a theoretical basis. In each Act the boy comes when the two tramps are absolutely at the end of their resources, but even here we have a significant variation in Act II. This time, the entire conversation between Vladimir and the boy takes place while Estragon is asleep. Thus the two acts employ both parallelism and contrast to strengthen the structure of the play.

Plot and Sub-Plot

The sub-plot of Pozzo and Lucky is structurally as well as thematically linked with the main plot. The waiting tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, take Pozzo to be Godot for whom they are waiting. In fact several critics maintain seriously that Pozzo is in fact Godot, and some even identify Lucky with Godot. Whether or not these identifications are valid, they certainly bear out the fact that the connection between the story of Pozzo and Lucky, and that of the two tramps, is a very close one. The parallelism and contrast which is there in the main story, operates at the level of the sub-plot also.

15

Waiting for Godot as an Absurd Play

Introductory

The term 'Absurd' in its modern sense was first used by Esslin and has ever since become attached to a certain outlook on life and a viewpoint in literature. Absurd drama has its roots deep in the past. It can be related to the mimes of ancient times as well as to the popular comedies of Italy. It connects with nonsense writing like that of Lewis Carroll as well as with the modern movement known as the Theatre of Cruelty. *Waiting for Godot* is not entirely an Absurd or Absurdist play, yet it is frequently cited as a typical example of it, perhaps because it is so well-known. A discussion of the play in terms of 'Absurd' drama reveals some important aspects of it.

Characteristics of the Absurd

The Absurdist attitude has some recognisable features. In certain ways it is a deeply serious attitude and must be distinguished from an attitude of despair. At bottom the Absurdist takes things rationally and not romantically. According to one critic the 'Absurd' presupposes a human judgment : only man can confront the disparity of experience, the nausea which he terms 'Absurd' "Short of this binomial—man and his awareness—there remains little more than a description of phenomena. No object is absurd until a man thinks it so ; until then it merely *is*—the absurd has no grip on it. To reason that the absurd stage must be a representation of the absurd is to neglect the syllepsis, man, that defines the absurd on stage and off. Life must be seen as futile play-acting ; but the stage that is supposed to be a representation of that life must be something more. Off stage, reality is stated in the human fact—a person his "absurd" demise is his inability to signify more than the illusory actor. On stage, that hollowness is not sufficient, for although it is a necessary part of the stage, it does not of itself provide the human opposition that names the absurd. The absurd is the providence of man ; make-believe, that of the stage. The

stage can be a metaphor for the circumstances of a man, but cannot represent those circumstances until it represents a man. It is thus legitimate to say that every dramatic representation of man is, when successfully effected, a successful representation of the absurd. When it attains less, drama is less than absurd It may be comical, odd or merely chaotic—absurd socially, not ontologically. When Ionesco denies the possibility of a dialogue between his protagonist and the antihuman on his stage, the antihuman figure materializes the necessary Moira of tragedy. But if the antihuman threat is essentially physical (in the form usually selected by Ionesco it is the overwhelming expression of a physical evidence), the overstatement of that evidence will cancel the symbolic as well as the physical assertion of the human being. If it does, the menace loses its human confirmation and reverts to the dimensions of a mechanical phenomenon."

Connection With the French Theatre

Waiting for Godot has some typical qualities of the modern French drama. The brutality of French drama in the postwar years derives in part from the physical explicitness with which the symbol of the antihuman has been portrayed. Samuel Beckett is one of those who have been fascinated by the precarious world of the contemporary situation, that moment of dramatic equilibrium when the maximal statement of the antihuman is still balanced by the evidence of its human informant. After the first performance of *Waiting for Godot*, in 1953, and again that of *Endgame*, in 1957, critics were convinced that Beckett had contrived an absolute negation of human existence, a drama situated beyond extinction. It took more time and other plays to draw their attention from the surface of these stagnant waters to the life of their microorganisms.

Positive Element

Waiting for Godot, like Beckett's other work, is basically positive, though detecting this is merely a matter of insight : "That life was discernible from the first, even upon the barren flatlands of *Godot*, variously described as a platter (in the original) and a board. For upon this apocalyptical tableland of emptiness and desolation ("a road in the country, with tree"), there is a person, a Chaplinesque tramp—the parody of man as a clotheshorse, with bowler hat and outlandish shoes : upon this mockery of landscape is the mockery of a man. But in man there is an inherent distinction, a significance which mockery does not dispel as effortlessly as it dispels the tarragon of French recipes. He is joined by another tramp, this one with a Slavic name, Vladimir. These two will be witnesses to the ineffectuality of commonsense (Estragon) and romantic notions (Vladimir)."

Impossibility of Action

In the world of *Godot* even the minimal action is impossible. A pair of battered shoes, the tramp's symbol, is the first centre of focus—Estragon is trying to remove his shoes. In the manner of every endeavour on this stage, even the most modest, it is a painful venture, and an unsure one. Estragon's first comment is, "Nothing doing." The words are echoed and amplified by Vladimir, one of whose romantic impulses is to discover a mataphysical significance to human utterances : "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't tried everything yet. And I resumed the struggle."

Loss of Identity

.he Second Act depicts the tramps' loss of identity. These two are old acquaintances, but as they are no longer sure of their own identity, their relationship is in doubt. They spend the night apart and are certain only of intervening beatings, since they are breathing and life is an endless rain of blows. Suicide is a recurrent temptation, but it requires an assertion of which they are not capable. "We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties......Hand in hand, from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were respectable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up." At present, they merely wait for the ultimate extinction, a response to which they look forward with longing and horror—and, also, disbelief for having been frustrated too long.

Vladimir and Salvation

The play depicts the difference in the attitude of the two tramps. Because he is of a speculative turn of mind, Vladimir considers briefly the possibility of Christian salvation, mainly as a way to kill time—the paramount activity during this metaphysical wake. But the very jargon of such speculation (salvation, hell, damnation, and so on) pales into meaninglessness because of the evidence of their being. Estragon, the realist, tires and declares, "I'm leaving"—and, since this is action, and thus an impossibility, "I'm not listening". The talk eventually bogs down in doubt over the account given by John of the Crucifixion, which, though generally invoked, is not confirmed by the Synoptics. "People are saps", concludes Estragon—and again, he proposes to leave. At this point, Vladimir introduces a metaphor for their inaction : "We can't (leave). We're waiting for Godot."

Conclusion

The ending of the play is not a conclusion in the usual sense. The wait continues. Estragon, the doubter, tires of the talk, falls asleep, and is awakened by Vladimir, who still finds meaning in human contact. But he refuses to listen to Estragon's nightmare—the nightmare of their existence again renders futile the words they use and their evocation. Their thought reverts to suicide, and for a while, they evaluate their chance of escape by helping each other to hang from the tree. The futility of the plan is soon apparent. Their speculation returns to Godot who did not make an actual promise and who, before coming, must first consult his friends, his agents, his correspondents, his books, and his bank account : he is someone 'in the driver's seat' before whom they are mere supplicants who have thrown away their rights.

16

The Characters in Waiting for Godot

(1) ESTRAGON

Introductory

Since Beckett does not provide introductory information about his characters, we have to put two and two together to get at a picture of what the characters are. Estragon has, we learn from one of his remarks, been a poet. He is of the view that he owes his poverty and his present out-at-elbows condition to this fact. Along with Vladimir he has worked as a grape-farmer in the Macon country. He was, however, even then unhappy, because he recounts how he once threw himself into the river Rhone and Vladimir had to fish him out. He is not only unpresentable but also the source of a strong stink. Vladimir says that this issues from Estragon's feet; he ascribes it to the fact that Estragon does not remove his boots for days on end.

Nature and Temperament

Estragon is of a weak build and is also timid and fearful by nature. This makes him an easy prey of the ruffians who beat him every night. He has the ability of dropping off to sleep at a moment's notice. However, he is unable to enjoy undisturbed sleep; he suffers from nightmares which he tries to relate to his friend, though in vain. He has also a weak memory, though it is possible that he exaggerates this to some extent just to tease and refute Vladimir and, indirectly, to help in some time passing away. He exploits Vladimir's evident affection for him more than once. Every now and then he says that he is going away and Vladimir has to patiently remind him that they cannot go away since they are waiting for Godot. He seems to be of a reckless nature, for once he even suggests that they should drop Godot altogether, only to be reminded by Vladimir of the punishment at Godot's hands which they would have to face in such a case. Estragon does not seem to be very observant either; in fact he

admits this fact when the two friends talk about their life together in the Maoon country. He did not pay attention when Vladimir talked to Godot, so he does not know what request his friend made to him. Ast compared with Vladimir Estragon is impatient and temperamental.

Skeptical Nature

Estragon is of a skeptical bent of mind. Unlike Vladimir he does not seem to believe in religion very much. He has not read the Bible but only seen the maps of the Holy Land in one edition of the Bible. Even that he enjoyed in a poetic way. The pale blue colour of the Dead Sea in the map was so fascinating that he felt like drinking the water and made up his mind that he would spend his honeymoon in that region and have a swim in the sea. On the other hand, he seems to be fond of coarse jokes. Moreover, he is seen to become physically excited when Vladimir says that death by hanging causes an orgasm. In contrast with Vladimir Estragon expresses his feelings violently and in strong language :

Vladimir : Where else do you think ? Do you not recognise the place ?

Estragon : (*Suddenly furious*). Recognise ! What is there to recognise ? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud ! And you talk to me about scenery ! (*Looking wildly about him.*) Look at this muckheap ! I've never stirred from it !

Vladimir : Calm yourself, calm yourself.

Estragon : You and your landscapes ! Tell me about the worms !

Vladimir : All the same, you can't tell me that this (*gesture*) bears any resemblance to...(*he hesitates*)...to the Macon country, for example. You can't deny there's a big difference.

Estragon : The Macon country ! Who's talking to you about the Macon country ?

Vladimir : But you were there yourself, in the Macon country.

Estragon : No, I was never in the Macon country. I've puked my puke of a life away here, I tell you ! Here ! In the Cackon country !

Spontaneous in Speech and Action

Vladimir seems to speak after calm reflection ; Estragon is impulsive and spontaneous. Thus when the tramps see the chicken bones it is Estragon who at once asks Pozzo whether he can have the bones. Vladimir does not approve of this act and comments : "You might have waited !" Similarly, when Pozzo says that he is obliged to them for their courtesy any would like to reward them for it, Estragon at once says that even ten francs would be a handsome gift for them. Vladimir expresses his approval of Estragon's words, saying, "We are not beggars ! " but Estragon does not take the hint. He says that even five francs would do. Vladimir cautions him saying, "That's enough !" Estragon misunderstands him and says that they could not accept less than five francs. He breaks down under the ordeal of waiting and begins to wail. He resents the fact that Vladimir should sing in his absence. In fact his attitude is more that of a jealous wife than that of a friend. Still, because he is helpless and undefended, and because his nature seems to be complementary to that of Vladimir, he cannot do without the latter. In spite of all the quarrels and disputes, and in spite of frequent statements that he would be better off if he separates from Vladimir, he always comes (as Vladimir contemptuously says) crawling back to him.

(2) VLADIMIR

Introductory

Vladimir seems to be somewhat older than Estragon. He is more stoutly built. He seems to be suffering from some serious disorder of the kidneys which makes it necessary for him to get up several times a night. Moreover it causes him acute pain when he tries to laugh, so that he has to be contented with a smile. He is affectionate and protective towards Estragon. He carries an assortment of carrots, turnips and radishes from which he gives something to his friend whenever he asks for it. He himself is not seen to eat anything of it. He seems to be more mature and sober in nature than the impulsive and temperamental Estragon. He seems to take waiting more philosophically than his friend. When he is alone on the stage, in the beginning of Act II, we find him to be singing. It is he who has conducted negotiations with Godot, and it is to him that the messages of Godot are addressed. He seems to be able to have a wider view of their situation than Estragon who is concerned with the surface as well as with the immediate present. Vladimir has an acute and literal sense of time, in contrast with Estragon who inclines towards a timeless view of things.

Characteristics

Vladimir is patient by nature. We find him arguing painstakingly with Estragon to convince him that they are waiting for

Godot at the right time and the right place. In Act II he once again has the same task—this time to convince his friend that they waited for Godot at the same place on the previous day also. Vladimir's task becomes all the more difficult because Estragon is not very cooperative and tries to create difficulties at every stage. In the face of Estragon's constant objections Vladimir's confidence wavers more than once. In Act II he at one stage comes round to Estragon's assertion that what they are looking at is the rising sun and not the setting sun. He has to humour and console Estragon more than once. In contrast with Estragon, Vladimir does not take so much pride in their conversational ability or in their inventiveness. In fact he once makes a sarcastic comment when Estragon makes a boast on this point, saying, "Yes, we are magicians"! Unlike Estragon and Pozzo, Vladimir has a clear memory and remembers events whether of the immediate or the remote past.

Touch of Mysticism

Although Vladimir is on the whole a realist, as contrasted with the fanciful Estragon, towards the end of the play we find him revealing a new aspect of his character. We can then see that there is a touch of the mystic in him. He seems to regard external reality as an illusion. He also distrusts others as regards their views of time and the past. He is suspicious that the messenger-boy will claim the next day that he never met them. He disbelieves Pozzo's story about his blindness. He is frightened by the boy's disclosure that Godot has a white beard. Estragon has been blissfully asleep while the boy of the second act came and delivered Godot's disappointing message. However, Vladimir thinks that in some deeper sense he himself might also be asleep. Estragon sleeps on while Vladimir suffers ; it is possible, the latter thinks, that he slept when others suffered :

> Am I sleeping now ? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today ? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot ? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us ? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be ?... He'll know nothing...Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps...At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on.

While it is true that the characters of Vladimir and Estragon are complementary, it is Estragon who needs Vladimir much more than the latter needs Estragon. Vladimir is, on the whole, patient, forbearing and tenderly attached to Estragon.

(3) POZZO

Introductory

Pozzo himself is the source of all the information that we have about him. We do not know to what extent we can take that information at its face value. He claims to be a landlord who owns the very place where Estragon and Vladimir are waiting. He also claims to have a large number of servants. He is indebted, he admits, to his slave Lucky for whatever touches of culture and refinement he possesses. However, he still seems to be something of a brute and a barbarian. In Act II his character seems to have undergone a change. Pozzo and Lucky, connected together with a rope, seem to be based upon a sentence in the Bible which says that two persons are better than one because if one falls the other can help him in getting up. This becomes all the more relevant in Act II.

Pozzo's Conceit

Pozzo is immensely conceited and arrogant. He seems to think of himself as a sort of God, who has the power of life and death over his servants. He mocks at Lucky, saying that the fool believes that Pozzo is short of servants. He generally refers to himself as 'we'. He speaks to the tramps as if he owned the whole earth. He is a great egoist. He tries to impress the tramps by speaking fancy words to them, though he has the honesty to admit that he learnt them from Lucky. It does not occur to him, in his conceit, that the famished tramps would be better-off with a small gift of money, or even some food, than the entertainment of Lucky's dance and thinking that he arranges for them. Even when he takes his food in the open, it is with all the fanfare of a ceremonial banquet. He is heartless enough to talk about the delight of smoking a pipe before the hungry tramps in front of whom he has dined on chicken and wine. He is not prepared to accept Estragon and Vladimir as belonging to the same species as he himself does, and the idea of their 'common' humanity tickles him to laughter :

> *Estragon* : (*Hastily*). We're not from these parts, sir.
>
> *Pozzo* : (*Halting*). You are human beings none the less. (*He puts on his glasses.*) As far as one can see. (*He takes off his glasses.*) Of the same species as myself. (*He bursts into an enormous laugh.*) Of the same species as Pozzo ! Made in God's image !

Pozzo and Lucky

There seems to be some sort of allegory in the relations between Pozzo and Lucky, though on the surface it seems to be the relationship merely of a cruel master and a pliant servant who is

prepared to bear every hardship so long as he can continue in his master's employment. Pozzo treats Lucky with the greatest brutality and, on top of it, claims that it is he who is the aggrieved party. The tramps at first take Lucky's side but after Pozzo's complaint they blame Lucky for being nasty to such a kind master. In Act II the realtionship between the two seems to undergo a significant change. The voluble Lucky, at least in his fits of thinking, has now been reduced to dumbness. The overbearing Pozzo, who used to order Lucky about with a jerk of the rope, is now dependent upon him for finding the way. Still, Lucky is seen to be patient and unrebellious as before.

Pozzo's Eloquence

Pozzo seems to take great pride in his power of speech-making. He makes elaborate preparations before he answers Estragon's simple question as to why the carrier does not put down his bags when he is standing still. Pozzo also gives what looks like a prepared speech before the tramps and then fishes for compliments :

> What is there so extraordinary about it ? Qua sky. It is pale and luminous like any sky at this hour of the day... after having poured forth ever since (*he hesitates, prosaic*) say ten o'clock in the morning (*lyrical*) tirelessly torrents of red and white light it begins to lose its effulgence, to grow pale (*gesture of the two hands lapsing by stages*), pale, ever a little paler, a little paler until (*dramatic pause, ample gesture of the two hands flung wide apart*) pppfff ! finished ! it comes to rest. But—(*hand raised in admonition*)—but behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging (*vibrantly*) and will burst upon us (*snaps his fingers*) pop ! like that !

Pozzo in Act II

Pozzo of Act II seems to be in many ways different from that of the First Act. Somehow he seems to have mellowed and grown more mature. He also seems to have learnt something from the suffering brought on by his blindness. He seems to have lost all sense of time. Indeed he resents that the tramps insist on knowing when he became blind. References to time torment him, he says. For him one day is as good as another. He does not remember having met Estragon and Vladimir on the previous day, or the fact that he was taking Lucky to a fair in order to sell him. He has lost much of his arrogance and conceit. He is now even more helpless than Lucky was in Act I. The tramps have him entirely at their mercy and kick him brutally in the crotch, so that he crawls away howling. He now seems to represent all humanity, for he responds to the name of both Abel and Cain. However, he has still not lost his animosity and

brutality towards Lucky, for he tells the tramps to kick him hard in his private parts if they are unable to rouse him otherwise. He till refers to him as 'pig'. The last words he speaks before he makes his exit are both profound and mysterious :

> One day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second...They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.

(4) LUCKY

Introductory

Lucky is Pozzo's slave who has been, in the past, also his friend and teacher. He is an inarticulate character, for except for the robot-like speech that he delivers when Pozzo asks him to 'think' he does not say anything. Apart from obeying Pozzo's orders, the only other actions in which we find him engaged are weeping when Pozzo says that such slaves ought to be killed, and kicking Estragon when he approaches him to wipe his tears. In the Second Act he has gone dumb, so there is no question of his saying anything. The most important evidence that we have for understanding Lucky's character, at least what he used to be, is the long speech which he delivers in Act I as a result of his master's demand that he should entertain Estragon and Vladimir with 'thinking'. Pozzo's praise of Lucky, as he used to be in the past, also tells us something about him.

Mechanical Actions

Lucky has degenerated from the human level to that of a machine. He has gone below even the level of animals. In fact he reminds one of a robot. The only difference is that he goes to sleep every now and then and has to be awakened with considerable effort. This can be seen from the long stage directions that shortly follow the entrance of Lucky and Pozzo, when Pozzo's orders and Lucky's movements are described :

> Up pig ! (*Pause.*) Every time he drops he falls asleep. (*Jerks the rope.*) Up hog ! (*Noise of Lucky getting up and picking up his baggage. Pozzo jerks the rope.*) Back ! (*Enter Lucky backwards.*) Stop ! (*Lucky Stops !*) Turn ! (*Lucky turns...*)...(*To Lucky.*) Coat ! (*Lucky puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag.*)

Even when he is not moving, Lucky keeps on holding the burdens, something which surprises Estragon so much that he asks Pozzo to explain why he does so. Pozzo's explanation is that in this way Lucky wants to impress Pozzo that he is a good servant, in the hope that he would not get rid of him. However, Pozzo says that he would not be taken in by this trick.

Characteristics

Although Lucky can hardly be regarded as a full-fledged human being, yet we can still have an idea of some of his traits of character. Pozzo says that Lucky is very vicious with strangers. We see a proof of this when he kicks Estragon viciously when the latter only wants to wipe away his tears. Pozzo says that he failed to carry out his orders only once, though he does not relate the incident of the solitary disobedience. Indeed we find Lucky carrying out all the orders of his master with a machine-like regularity. It seems that Pozzo makes Lucky dine on the discarded bones from his own dinner. On the present occasion Lucky remains silent when he is asked about the bones ; this makes Pozzo apprehensive that Lucky might be ill. The only human feeling that we find Lucky exhibiting is his weeping when he hears Pozzo say that it would be better to kill him. In the Second Act he is beaten by Estragon but takes no action even to defend him ; in fact Pozzo tells the tramps that Lucky never defends himself.

Lucky's Past

Lucky seems to have fallen steeply from his wonderful past, and further deterioration takes place in him between Act I and Act II. We can see from Pozzo's statement as to what Lucky used to be earlier :

> *Pozzo* : *(Sobbing)*. He used to be so kind...so helpful...and entertaining...my good angel... and now . he's killing me.

Later Pozzo admits that the high-sounding and impressive words he has spoken before them were taught to him by Lucky. Now, however, Lucky gets on Pozzo's nerves to such an extent that he has determined to be rid of him :

> *Pozzo* : *(Groaning, clutching his head)*. I can't bear it...any longer...the way he goes on...you've no idea...it's terrible...he must go...*(he waves his arms)*...I'm going mad...*(he collapses, his head in his hands.)*...I can't bear it...any longer...

During the later part of Lucky's harangue we see Pozzo getting more and more agitated till it becomes absolutely impossible for him to bear Lucky's words and he shouts to the tramps to put a stop to the speech by taking away Lucky's hat. He vents his fury on the hat by trampling upon it. When asked whether Lucky would be able to walk again after the severe beating, he says that if he cannot walk he must crawl. Lucky's reactions are so mechanical that when the strap of the bag is put in his hand he fully regains his senses. This means that

he is as much a slave of mechanical habit as an animal. Although Lucky is inarticulate, he does not seem to be entirely insensible of the degradation that has come over him. One may infer this from the fact that he no longer dances the gay and stately measures of the past, but when his master asks him to dance he goes through certain contortions to which he has given the name "The Net". Pozzo explains that Lucky thinks he is actually entangled in a net. Lucky's powers of thinking also have, as Pozzo attests, declined. Now he literally as well as metaphorically thinks through his hat. What he speaks out is a perfect stream of consciousness which is not subjected to any rational control. A still further stage in his mental and physical deterioration is when the incoherence and inarticulateness are replaced by the silence of dumbness.

Lucky's Speech

Lucky's speech is not delivered voluntarily. It is made at the orders of Pozzo who has asked him to 'think' for the entertainment of the tramps. In many respects the speech is stupid ; in part it is like a record that has become worn out and where the needle again and again gets stuck at a word or phrase. It is absolutely lacking in punctuation. It employs some of the stock phrases of the professional speaker in a manner which is that of parody—e.g. repeating words like 'I resume', 'for reasons unknown, but time will tell', 'but not so fast', 'in short', 'in brief', 'in a word', etc. The words which are reduplicated, or have some of their syllables lengthened out, include, "quaquaquaqua' (a repetition of the Latin word 'qua') and 'Acacacacademy' (lengthening out the word 'Academy'). The speech seems to flow on without aim or plan but can be seen to have a definite drift. Lucky begins by speaking of a personal God, like that of the Old Testament, a God with a beard, and one who has some questionable 'divine' attributes, e.g. divine apathia, divine athambia, divine aphasia. It is a God who loves His creatures, but not all of them—the dear love has 'some exceptions for reasons unknown'. These unfortunates are 'plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues...it will fire the firmament...blast hell to heaven'. Then, with much absurd repetition, Lucky's speech stresses a melancholy truth, that in spite of all the outward strides of progress, man, like Lucky himself, has only shrunk and dwindled, and all that has been left of him is the skull among the stones of Connemara. This is a depressing thought, so depressing that neither Pozzo, nor even the tramps can withstand it. We can see the reactions of the listeners, to Lucky's speech, from an extract from the stage direction which precedes it :

> *Pozzo more and more agitated and groaning...Vladimir and Estragon protest violently. Pozzo jumps up, pulls on the rope. General outcry. Lucky pulls on the rope, staggers, shouts his text. All three throw themselves on Lucky who struggles and shouts his text.*

At last they have to take away Lucky's hat and stifle him when the speech has reached the word 'unfinished'. By trampling on his hat, Pozzo believes that he has put an end to Lucky's thinking. One does not know if the loss of the hat has meant the end of Lucky's thinking, but it has certainly stopped his thinking aloud, for when we meet him again he has become completely dumb.

(5) A BOY

Introductory

The first question which arises in the case of this character is whether there is only one messenger-boy who makes an appearance in each act, or there are two of them. So far as the dramatist is concerned the first seems to be the answer, for the cast mentions only 'A Boy' who is played in both the acts by the same person in the first English performance of the play. Yet, if we are to go by the words of the character himself, the boy of Act II is different from the one who brings a message in Act I. However, Vladimir has a suspicion that it is the same person who brings the two messages, though he does try to convince himself that the boy of Act II might be the brother whom the boy of the First Act mentions.

Characteristics

The role of the boy is only functional, hence one need not look for a fully developed character. Yet there are some character-traits, most of which are typical rather of boys in general than exclusive to this particular specimen. The boy is evidently timid and is quite understandably afraid of the stranger, Pozzo and Lucky, more especially Pozzo who manages Lucky with a whip. It is because of this that a long delay takes place in the delivery of his first message from Godot. He is there but does not step forward out of fear of Pozzo. He is frightened when Estragon speaks sharply to him, asking him to explain why he delayed his message so much. As soon as he is allowed to go he runs away. Vladimir is, however, able to extract some information from him. The boy says that he is well looked after by Godot, though his brother gets beatings. He minds the goats while his brother minds the sheep. He sleeps in the loft with his brother. When asked whether he is happy or unhappy, his answer is characteristic: "I don't know, sir." The boy of Act II also gives some information about Godot, in answer to Vladimir's questions. He claims that it was not he who came to deliver the message on the previous day. He cannot even confirm whether it was his brother who did so. Vladimir, suspicious that the boy is telling lies, asks him sternly to mind not to say the next day that he did not see them. As in Act I the boy exits running as soon as Vladimir lets him go.

(6) GODOT

Introductory

Godot must be the most puzzling character in all dramatic literature. He gives the name to the play yet he does not appear in it even once. Although Vladimir and Estragon have met him, the latter claims that he would not be able to recognise him if he saw him. Vladimir has spoken to him at some length, yet even he has to ask the boy whether Godot has a beard, and if so, what colour it is. The very name of the character is a subject of controversy, though it is almost certain that some connection with God is intended by the dramatist. Some critics hold the view that Godot does appear in the play. They identify him variously either with Pozzo (as Estragon also does) or even with Lucky. When the writer himself was once asked to explain Godot, he said that he did not know, otherwise he would have done so in the play itself. It need not, however, be taken at its face value, all that it means is that it did not suit Beckett's purpose to clarify Godot's identity and that he did not think it proper to say outside the play what he felt disinclined to say within the play.

Origin and Meaning

Several explanations have been offered of the origin and derivation of the name Godot. One suggestion, which seems quite plausible, is that Godot is a diminutive of the word God, somewhat like the word booklet from book. This would mean that the tramps are waiting for a diminished and shrunken version of God. Another view is that the title of the play is derived from a French book whose title, translated into English, means, 'Waiting for God'. This would strengthen the impression that there is a link between God and Godot. Still another view is that there is a connection between Godot and the character 'Godeau' in a play by Balzac. Both these characters are eagerly awaited by others as saviours, with the difference that in Balzac's play Godeau does arrive at the end and performs the expected role of a saviour.

Symbolic Significance

Whether or not there is a symbolism in the other five characters in the play, there certainly is something symbolic about Godot. He has been identified by some as representing some underground leader of the Resistance during the German occupation of France, though it might be argued that the tramps' fear of him makes it just as likely that Godot is meant to stand for some link with the occupying forces who has promised help and protection to the tramps. That is why they dare not break the appointment with him. He may also be regarded as symbolic of God of the Old Testament, God who loves us all dearly, but with some exceptions,

for reasons unknown which time will tell. That is why the touch about Godot having a white beard is so significant. Godot has a large number of functionaries under him. He loves one but beats the other ; one minds goats, while the other minds sheep. This links up with Cain and Abel who had similarly different duties and who were the recipient of differential treatment at the hands of God. We may, if we like, connect this with the differential treatment meted out to the two thieves in the Gospel story, one of whom was saved while the other was damned. Perhaps the Second Act is an allusion to the hope of the second coming which in this case becomes the second disappointment. It is significant that when Estragon asks Vladimir as to how their condition would be affected if Godot comes, the latter says each time : 'Then we'll be saved !'

Conclusion

Godot is both mysterious and ambiguous, and the elements of mystery and ambiguity seem to be deliberate. He seems to represent several ideas, one of which surely is that of superstitious religion and exploitation of the have-nots by the all-powerful haves. Godot keeps Vladimir and Estragon waiting for long, day after day, but he does not think it necessary either to express any regret or give any reason as to why he is unable to come. And even if he does come, there does not appear to be much basis for the tramps' hopes. In fact they have not put any definite request to him which he might grant. Perhaps they are waiting more out of fear than out of hope. We gather from the talk of the tramps that they treat Godot like a god to whom one only makes a prayer rather than asks for a boon :

Estragon : What exactly did we ask him for ?
Vladimir : Were you not there ?
Estragon : I can't have been listening.
Vladimir : Oh...nothing very definite.
Estragon : A kind of prayer.
Vladimir : Precisely.
Estragon : A vague supplication.
Vladimir : Exactly.
Estragon : And what did he reply ?
Vladimir : That he'd see.
Estragon : That he couldn't promise anything.
Vladimir : That he'd have to think it over.

This makes it clear that Godot has not given them any real reason for hope. If they keep on waiting for him, it is mainly because their going away would annoy him.

17

Model Explanations

(1)

I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle.

(*Act I* : *Page 9*)

The non-action of *Waiting for Godot* is reflected in its first speech, a line that Estragon speaks while he is alone on the stage. "Nothing to be done", he says, when he is unsuccessful in his resumed attempt to pull off from his foot the boot that is hurting it. This remark is overheard by Vladimir, who happens to enter the stage right at the moment. The present excerpt is Vladimir's comment on what he has heard.

Not, knowing the immediate provocation which is behind Estragon's utterance, Vladimir misunderstands it and applies it to his own situation. He construes Estragon's remark as a comment on the futility of his life and states that he also is now inclined to agree with him, i.e. in his case also there is "Nothing to be done". This has occurred to him earlier also, but he has always tried to conceal the truth from himself. He has sought to console himself by the thought that he must not lose heart till he has tried every avenue. This enabled him to resume the struggle against adverse circumstances. The implication is that he is unable to practise this self-deception any longer.

(2)

It's too much for one man. (*Pause. Cheerfully.*) *On the other hand what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.*

(*Act I* : *Page 10*)

Vladimir casts his mind back over the past. He recollects that his help has been of great use to his fellow-tramp, Estragon. But for his help Estragon would long back have been reduced to a heap of bones. Estragon wishes to know what Vladimir is driving at, and the latter makes the comment given above.

Vladimir states that what he has endured is too much for one man. He implies that he has had not only to fend for himself but also to look after and protect Estragon. Feeling perhaps that Estragon might be offended by his words, he changes his tone. He now speaks cheerfully, saying that it is no use getting disheartened now, for at this stage nothing matters for them, for good or for ill. They ought to have thought of it a long time back and done something about it. His later speech makes it clear that what he wishes to convey is that they ought to have realized the hopelessness of their situation a long time back and committed suicide. 'In the nineties' need not be taken literally, perhaps it is not meant factually and only reflects the speaker's state of mind, as does the phrase 'a million years ago'.

(3)

Estragon : (*Pointing*). *You might button it all the same.*

Vladimir : (*Stooping*). *True.* (*He buttons his fly.*) *Never neglect the little things of life.*

Estragon : *What do you expect, you always wait till the last moment.*

(*Act I* : *Page 10*)

Vladimir has met the requirement of courtesy by asking Estragon as to how his foot is feeling now. Estragon tells him that he need not have asked, because he knows very well how badly Estragon's shoe is hurting him. It is now Estragon's turn to be polite to Vladimir, who has told him that he is suffering acutely from some trouble which is now turning out to be too painful to be borne. Vladimir displays resentment at the unnecessary question, just as Estragon had done. At this Estragon cleverly turns the conversation in another direction.

Noticing Vladimir's open fly, Estragon remarks that he might button it up, howsoever hard his trouble might be hurting him. Evidently, Vladimir has just emptied his bladder and forgotten to button up his fly. Estragon also hints that Vladimir's trouble is caused by the fact that he postpones things (i.e., emptying his bladder) till the last moment. Vladimir accepts his fellow-tramp's advice good-humouredly and buttons up his fly. He says that one ought to be careful about the little things of life.

(4)

Vladimir : *One daren't even laugh any more.*

Estragon : *Dreadful privation.*

Vladimir : *Merely smile.* (*He smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly.*) *It's not the same thing. Nothing to be done.*

(*Act I* : *Page 11*)

Vladimir asks Estragon whether it would not be a good idea for them to repent. Estragon cannot see what there is of which they should repent. He asks satirically whether Vladimir means that they should repent of the sin of having been born. This appears to Vladimir to be a very good joke and he bursts out laughing. However, the disease of the urinary tract makes laughing very painful to him and the pain interrupts the laugh. His face becomes twisted and he remarks that now one dare not even laugh. Estragon agrees that being prevented from laughing is indeed a dreadful deprivation. Vladimir adds that he can at the most afford only to smile. He assumes one massive smile and keeps it on for some time, but soon gives it up. A smile is not at all as satisfying as a laugh. It is a part of the misery of Vladimir's situation that he is denied the ordinary human comfort of laughing over a good joke.

(5)

I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim' We'll be happy.

(*Act I* : *Page 12*)

Vladimir is anxious that Estragon should enter into a discussion about the Gospel story relating to the two thieves who were hanged along with Christ. One of the Gospels records that out of the two thieves one was saved, while the other was damned. In this connection, Estragon confesses that he did look into the Bible, though he did not exactly read it. The aforementioned lines are Estragon's reply.

The edition of the Bible which Estragon saw had some maps of the Holy Land including the Dead Sea which surrounds it. In the map the colour of the sea was shown as pale blue. This was so fascinating that it made Estragon feel thirsty and produced in him a desire to drink that water. This is ironical since the Dead Sea, as its very name indicates, is not suitable for supporting life. Sea water is in any case too salty to be either palatable or healthy for drinking ; the water of the Dead Sea is so salty that even fish cannot

survive in it. Estragon liked the map so much that he decided that it was the right place to spend a honeymoon. He imagined that living there and having a swim in the Dead Sea would have made him happy. Vladimir quite rightly comments that Estragon ought to have been a poet. Estragon points to his ragged clothes saying that it would be quite obvious that he was once a poet.

(6)

Estragon : (*With exaggerated enthusiasm*). *I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.*

Vladimir : *One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.*

Estragon : *Who ?*

Vladimir : *What ?*

(*Act I* : *Page 13*)

Estragon has not shown much interest in the Biblical story of the two thieves who were to be crucified along with Christ. Vladimir makes a desperate appeal to his fellow-tramp to help him in keeping the ball of conversation rolling. Estragon obliges by remarking at once that he finds the story most extraordinarily interesting. Vladimir repeats that out of the four evangelists who wrote about the crucifixion only one records that one of the two thieves was saved. Two evangelists don't mention the thieves at all and the third writes that both the thieves abused Christ and were consequently damned. By this time Estragon, who has not been really paying attention to the conversation, asks him what he is referring to. It seems that Vladimir himself is not very particular about what he has been saying and has to ask Estragon as to what his question relates to.

(7)

Estragon : *What is it ?*

Vladimir : *I don't know. A willow.*

Estragon : *Where are the leaves ?*

Vladimir : *It must be dead.*

Estragon : *No more weeping.*

Vladimir : *Or perhaps it's not the season.*

Estragon : *Looks to me more like a bush.*

Vladimir : *A shrub.*

Estragon : *A bush.*

(*Act I* : *Page 14*)

Estragon suggests to Vladimir that they should leave. Vladimir replies that they cannot leave since they must wait for Godot. Completely baffled, Estragon now changes the direction of his attack. He suggests that they may not be waiting at the proper place. Vladimir replies that he asked them to wait by the side of the tree and that this is the only tree in the locality. The conversation now shifts to the identity and the attributes of the tree.

Estragon wants to know what tree it is. Vladimir is not sure about the identity of the tree but hazards the guess that it is a willow tree. Estragon wants to know what has happened to its leaves. Vladimir's reply is that it might not be a living tree. Estragon puns on the phrase 'Weeping Willow' to say that if the tree is dead it would mean that it would no longer have to weep. Vladimir continues his previous observation, adding that it might not be the right season for the tree to produce leaves. Estragon now not only doubts the identity of the tree but objects to its being called a tree at all. According to him it looks more like a bush. Vladimir also, apparently, no longer thinks that it is the willow tree, and remarks that it looks more like a shrub. Estragon again claims that it is some sort of bush. Thus the tramps seem to have forgotten completely that they are not interested in the identity of the tree but the question whether they were waiting for Godot at the right place.

(8)

Vladimir : *A—. What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place?*

Estragon : *He should be here.*

Vladimir : *He didn't say for sure he'd come.*

Estragon : *And if he doesn't come?*

Vladimir : *We'll come back tomorrow.*

Estragon : *And then the day after tomorrow.*

Vladimir : *Possibly.*

Estragon : *And so on.*

(*Act I* : *Page 14*)

Estragon expresses a doubt whether they are waiting for Godot at the right place. Vladimir momentarily wavers with doubt but then asserts that he asked them to wait by the side of a tree and the tree before them is the only one in the locality. Estragon observes that it is not really a tree but only a bush. Vladimir suddenly realises that Estragon is indirectly suggesting that they are waiting at the wrong place and he asks his friend to specify if that is what he means. Estragon still does not speak directly but implies that the

fact that Godot has still not turned up suggests that they are not at the right place. Vladimir counters this by saying that Godot did not definitely promise to come that day. Estragon wants to know what they are to do if Godot fails to come. Vladimir answers that in that case they must return the next day to wait for him. Estragon adds that they would have to keep on coming everyday till Godot appears. Vladimir remarks that Estragon's way of putting it is brutally frank, but he does not dispute the truth of what Estragon is saying. There is no way out for them except to come and wait for Godot everyday till he chooses to come.

(9)

Vladimir : *He said Saturday.* (*Pause.*) *I think.*

Estragon : *You think.*

Vladimir : *I must have made a note of it.*

He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish.

Estragon : (*Very insidious*). *But what Saturday ? And is it Saturday ? Is it not rather Sunday ?* (*Pause.*) *Or Monday ?* (*Pause.*) *Or Friday ?*

Vladimir : (*Looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape*). *It's not possible !*

Estragon : *Or Thursday ?*

(*Act I* : *Page 15*)

Estragon now makes one more attempt to discomfit Vladimir. For the time being Estragon gives up his previous objection that they might not be waiting for Godot at the right place. He now insinuates that they are waiting at the wrong time. Vladimir seems to be on less sure ground here. He says that Godot asked them to wait for him on Saturday, but immediately afterwards he adds, 'I think', implying that he is not sure of it. Estragon seizes on his uncertainty and mockingly repeats Vladimir's hesitant admission. Vladimir says that he noted down the day Godot mentioned, and tries to locate the paper. He searches for it in his pockets, which are full of various useless things but is unable to find it. This further emboldens Estragon who says that Godot might not have meant this Saturday, or that it might not be Saturday today but Sunday. He carries his argument one step further by saying that it might be Monday, or even Friday. This makes Vladimir absolutely confused and he starts looking around him, as though he would find today's date written somewhere on the landscape. Although shaken, he exclaims that what Estragon is suggesting is not possible. Estragon seizes the opportunity to have one more fling at Vladimir ; he says that the day might even be Thursday. Thus out of the days of the week Tuesday and Wednesday are the only two days left out by Estragon.

(10)

Estragon : *(Coldly). There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.*

Vladimir : *You wouldn't go far.*

Estragon : *That would be too bad, really too bad. (Pause.) Wouldn't it, Didi, be really too bad? (Pause.) When you think of the beauty of the way. (Pause.) And the goodness of the wayfarers. (Pause. Wheedling.) Wouldn't it, Didi?*

(Act I : Page 16)

Estragon wants to relate to Vladimir a dream that he has lately had. Vladimir insists that he is not interested in listening to it. Estragon tries desperately that Vladimir should consent to listen to him but Vladimir declines resolutely. Estragon is offended and observes that he sometimes wonders whether it would not be better for them to part. Vladimir does not say whether it would not be better or not, but remarks that Estragon would not be able to go alone very far and would come back to Vladimir. Estragon says it would be too bad if that were to happen. He wants his friend to confirm that, considering the beauty of the way and the goodness of his fellow-travellers, Estragon should not be able to go very far. Most probably Estragon is being sarcastic. He asks Vladimir pleadingly to confirm what he is saying, but the fellow-tramp only asks him to calm down.

(11)

Estragon : *(Highly excited). An erection!*

Vladimir : *With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that?*

Estragon : *Let's hang ourselves immediately!*

(Act I : Page 17)

Vladimir and Estragon are wondering what they might do while they are waiting for Godot. Quite irrationally, Estragon suggests that they might hang themselves. Vladimir meditates on the suggestion favourably; this mode of suicide, he says, has the merit of giving a person sexual gratification. This makes Estragon highly excited. Vladimir continues that hanging gives a person not only an erection but also an orgasm, and that a mandrake grows at the place where the seminal fluid falls. According to a popular legend it is the blood from the victim which is responsible for the growth of a mandrake. The same legend says that when a mandrake is pulled out of the soil, a shrieking sound can be heard. Vladimir's version of the legend explains the shrieking also in sexual terms. Estragon can no longer contain himself and says excitedly that they must immediately hang themselves.

(12)

Estragon : *So you tell me. I don't know. There's an even chance. Or nearly.*

Vladimir : *Well? What do we do?*

Estragon : *Don't let's do anything. It's safer.*

Vladimir : *Let's wait and see what he says.*

Estragon : *Who?*

Vladimir : *Godot.*

(*Act I* : *Page 18*)

Vladimir and Estragon are discussing whether the tree by the road-side, where they are waiting for Godot, is suitable for hanging themselves from. Vladimir suggests that this could soon be found out by actual experiment. He suggests that since Estragon is the lighter of the two, he should try first. Estragon proposes that they should do just the opposite i.e. Vladimir should be the first to try. If the bough can support his weight it will certainly support Estragon's. According to him if they were to do as Vladimir suggests then the result might be that Estragon's hanging might get through but the bough might break when it is Vladimir's. turn. Thus he might be left alone in the world. For some time either Vladimir does not understand Estragon's reasoning or pretends not to do so.

When Estragon says that if the bough can hang Vladimir without breaking it can hang anything, Vladimir questions whether he is really the heavier of the two. Estragon reminds him that it was he himself who said so. Estragon is not sure on this point. In any case there is an equal chance, or almost equal, of Vladimir's being the heavier. Vladimir is baffled and wants to know what they should do now. Estragon now changes his stand completely. His answer to Vladimir's question is that they should not do anything at all, since that would be safer. Vladimir also comes round to this view. They should, he suggests, wait to see how Godot replies to their request before they hang themselves. Estragon at first agrees with this, but soon backs out and proposes that they should hang themselves while the iron is hot, i.e. while their minds are firmly made up on the question. Then they forget the hanging altogether and begin to discuss what they had asked Godot to do for them.

(13)

Estragon : *What exactly did we ask him for?*

Vladimir : *Were you not there?*

Estragon : *I can't have been listening.*

Vladimir : *Oh...nothing very definite.*

Estragon : *A kind of prayer.*

Vladimir : *Precisely.*

Estragon : *A vague supplication.*

Vladimir : *Exactly.*

(*Act I* : *Page 18*)

Vladimir and Estragon discuss for quite some time the suggestion of the latter that they should commit suicide by hanging themselves. They come to the conclusion that the tree before them would not be suitable for this purpose because it might not bear their weight. Vladimir wonders what they are to do in that case, i.e. if they forego even hanging. Estragon says that it would be a better idea not to do anything—it would be safer. Vladimir says that they ought to wait, in order to know what Godot has to offer to them. The tramps then recapitulate what they asked Godot to do for them.

It is Estragon who asks Vladimir to specify what they asked Godot to do for them. He reminds Estragon that he also was there when they talked to Godot Estragon's reply to this is that he must not have been paying attention to the conversation. Vladimir then states that they did not ask Godot to do anything definite for them. Estragon joins in by saying that they made only a kind of vague prayer to him. Vladimir expresses his agreement with this statement. Estragon resumes that what they said to him was only a kind of humble request for help and protection. Once again Vladimir agrees. This exchange between the two tramps signifies that they treat Godot as a sort of God to whom they have addressed their prayer.

(14)

Estragon : *I said, And we ?*

Vladimir : *I don't understand.*

Estragon : *Where do we come in ?*

Vladimir : *Come in ?*

Estragon : *Take your time.*

Vladimir : *Come in ? On our hands and knees.*

Estragon : *As bad as that ?*

(*Act I* : *Page 19*)

Vladimir and Estragon repeat between themselves the request that they made to Godot, and the answer he gave. Godot

mentioned that he would have to think over their request in the calmness of his home, and consult his friends, correspondents and others before replying to it. The tramps agree that what Godot said is quite the normal thing. However, Estragon wonders what their position in this matter is. The present exchange is a sequel to this question of Estragon's.

Estragon puts his question rather vaguely, in the words, 'And we ?" Vladimir fails to understand his meaning. Estragon repeats his remarks but Vladimir still fails to follow him. Estragon gets rather offended and remarks that Vladimir is free to take his own time in understanding his remark, which he now elaborates into "where do we come in ?" After a while Vladimir manages to understand him and says that they must crawl before Godot and accept whatever he says. Estragon is doubtful if their position is as bad as that. Vladimir reminds him that they have no rights or privileges left because they have surrendered them. The lines seem to allude to the position of the French during the time they were ruled by the German occupation forces.

(15)

Estragon : (*Chewing*). *I asked you a question.*

Vladimir : *Ah.*

Estragon : *Did you reply ?*

Vladimir : *How's the carrot.*

Estragon : *It's a carrot.*

Vladimir : *So much the better, so much the better.* (*Pause.*) *What was it you wanted to know ?*

Estragon : *I've forgotten.*

(*Act I* : *Page 20*)

Estragon is hungry and Vladimir gives him a carrot to eat. It is the last carrot he has got, and he asks Estragon to make the most of it. Estragon starts chewing the carrot and, while still doing so, remarks that he has asked Vladimir a question. (He has not really done so.) Vladimir merely grunts, 'Ah'. Estragon asks him whether he replied to his question. This makes it absolutely clear that Estragon is not interested either in the imaginary question which he says he has put to Vladimir, or any answer that the latter might give. He is interested only in having some conversation so that the time of the endless waiting passes less irksomely. Vladimir asks a pointless question : how does Estragon find the carrot ? Estragon's answer is equally inane : it is only a carrot. Once again, Vladimir has not paid any attention to what his friend has said. He

says, 'So much the better, so much the better', as though Estragon had greatly appreciated the quality of the carrot. Then he suddenly asks Estragon as to what his question was. However, by now Estragon has forgotten (if he ever remembered) what the question was A little later he remarks that he wanted his friend to tell him if they were in any way tied to Godot.

(16)

Vladimir	:	*With me it's just the opposite.*
Estragon	:	*In other words ?*
Vladimir	:	*I get used to the muck as I go along.*
Estragon	:	*(After prolonged reflection). Is that the opposite ?*
Vladimir	:	*Question of temperament.*
Estragon	:	*Of character.*
Vladimir	:	*Nothing you can do about it.*
Estragon	:	*No use struggling.*
Vladimir	:	*One is what one is.*

(Act I : Page 21)

Estragon is eating the last of the carrots. Vladimir asks him how he finds it. Estragon replies that it is just a carrot. He adds that he likes it less and less as he goes on eating it. Vladimir remarks that it is just the opposite of this with him. Estragon does not understand it and asks him to explain. The latter does so : as he goes on with the wretched food, he gets used to it. Estragon goes into long deliberation and at the end of it remarks that it is not actually the opposite, for it means that Vladimir dislikes the thing as much as Estragon does. Then, quite unaccountably, both of them take up a new position—that their reactions to carrot-eating are different because of the difference in their characters.

Vladimir says that the attitude one adopts to bad food, whether one likes it less and less as one goes on eating it, or gradually gets used to it, is a reflection of one's temperament. Joining in, Estragon adds that it is a question of one's character. In a similar vein, Vladimir observes that one's temperament is quite settled and one can do nothing to alter it. Taking up the same line, Estragon observes that it is useless to struggle against one's character. Both of them agree on this point and express their agreement repeatedly. This phase of the dialogue ends with Estragon's remark "Nothing to be done" and his enquiry whether Vladimir would like to finish the remainder of the carrot. It is clear that when the two tramps discuss carrots and temperaments they are simply passing time, they do not have anything serious to argue about.

(17)

Estragon : (*Hastily*). *We're not from these parts, sir.*

Pozzo : (*Halting*). *You are human beings none the less.* (*He puts on his glasses*). *As far as one can see.* (*He takes off his glasses.*) *Of the same species as myself.* (*He bursts into an enormous laugh.*) *Of the same species as Pozzo ! Made in God's image !*

(*Act I : Page 23*)

Vladimir and Estragon at first mistake Pozzo to be the person, Godot, they are waiting for. This is especially the case with Estragon. When Pozzo gives his name, the tramps say they are unacquainted with it although Vladimir says he once knew a family called Gozzo. It must have been a disreputable family, for the mother, as Vladimir says, suffered from a venereal disease. Estragon begs to be excused on the basis of their being strangers in these parts. Pozzo accepts their apologies and makes some comments on his kinship with them.

Pozzo tries to reassure the tramps that their being unacquainted with his name does not matter. Even though they are strangers, they are human beings none the less. He qualifies this statement by adding that they are human beings as far as he can see. He makes this remark after putting on his glasses and, presumably, looking closely at them. Pozzo realizes that when he assigns the tramps to the human species he is saying that he and they belong to the same species. This thought amuses him greatly and he bursts out into a loud laugh. The Bible says that God made man in His own image. It amuses Pozzo to think that Estragon and Vladimir are also made in God's image.

(18)

Estragon : *Oh I say.*

Vladimir : *A running sore !*

Estragon : *It's the rope.*

Vladimir : *It's the rubbing.*

Estragon : *It's inevitable.*

Vladimir : *It's the knot.*

Estragon : *It's the chafing.*

(*Act I : Page 25*)

Vladimir has noticed a running sore on Lucky's neck. He points Estragon's attention to the same, but the latter is unable to

see anything for some time. Vladimir asks him to come near him and then see. Estragon does so and is able to see the wound. They begin to discuss the cause of the wound. Both are agreed that it is caused by the rope which is tied round Lucky's neck, but they begin to discuss the exact mode of it. Vladimir says it has been caused by the rubbing of the rope. Estragon counters that it has been caused by the knot of the rope. Estragon says once again that the sore must have been caused by the constant rubbing of the rope. Both of them then look more closely at the sore and in the process Vladimir notices that Lucky is quite handsome-looking.

(19)

> *It's the nicotine, one absorbs it in spite of one's precautions. (Sighs.) You know how it is. (Silence.) But perhaps you don't smoke? Yes? No? It's of no importance. (Silence.) But how am I to sit down now, without affectation, now that I have risen?*
>
> (*Act I : Page 28*)

Pozzo passes his time by talking to the tramps. He smokes one pipe and, having finished it, lights another. While doing so he observes that he normally does not smoke two pipes in quick succession because the nicotine in the tobacco brings on palpitations in him. Whatever precautions one may take, one is sure to absorb some of the nicotine. He casually asks them whether they smoke and makes it clear that he is not at all bothered about the answer they give.

Pozzo wishes to sit down once again but he feels that, once having stood up, if he sits down it would seem affected of him, or it may create an impression that he does not know his own mind. He indirectly suggests to the tramps that they should request him to sit down so that he can do so without loss of dignity. This brings out Pozzo's hypocrisy. A couple of pages later he renews his suggestion that Estragon should ask him to sit down once again. Estragon does so with exaggerated politeness and Pozzo, after some pretended hesitation, consents to sit down again.

(20)

> *Pozzo* : *Perhaps I haven't got it quite right. He wants to mollify me, so that I'll give up the idea of parting with him. No, that's not exactly it either.*
>
> *Vladimir* : *You want to get rid of him?*
>
> (*Act I : Page 31*)

Estragon has asked Pozzo as to why Lucky does not put down his bags even when he is standing still. After quite some time Pozzo

answers the question. At first he says that Lucky perhaps wants to impress him so that he may keep him in his employment. Pozzo feels that he has not explained it properly and makes another attempt to do so. He says that Lucky wants to please him by such a behaviour, so that Pozzo might give up the idea of getting rid of him. Pozzo still feels dissatisfied with the way he has explained it. However, Vladimir is struck with one part of Pozzo's answer : that he wants to get rid of Lucky, so he asks Pozzo again and again whether he is going to dismiss Lucky. Like Estragon's question, this question also is answered by Pozzo after quite some time.

(21)

> *An hour ago* (*he looks at his watch, prosaic*) *roughly* (*lyrical*) *after having poured forth ever since* (*he hesitates, prosaic*) *say ten o'clock in the morning lyrical*) *tirelessly torrents of red and white light it begins to lose its effulgence, to grow pale* (*gesture of the two hands lapsing by stages*), *pale, ever a little paler, a little paler until* (*dramatic pause, ample gesture of the two hands flung wide apart*) *pppfff*! *finished*! *it comes to rest. But*—(*hand raised in admonition*) —*but behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging* (*vibrantly*) *and will burst upon us* (*snaps his fingers*) *pop* ! *like that* !
>
> (*Act I* : *Page 37*)

Pozzo tries to impress the tramps by delivering a high-sounding and evidently prepared speech on the evening landscape. He points towards the sky and asks all three (including Lucky, that is) to look at it. They do so. He then harangues about the beauties of the evening sky.

In appearance the sky is, says Pozzo, like the sky at any other place in the same latitude, when the weather is fine. Pozzo assumes a lyrical tone when he speaks some of his sentences, but when inspiration deserts him his tone also becomes prosaic. He wants to say that the sun has been shining brightly since about ten in the morning. It started losing its brightness about an hour back. After that the sun has been losing the brilliance gradually. At last it loses all its brightness and it becomes dark. The sky looks calm but underneath this calmness night advances furiously and envelops everything. Pozzo assumes various dramatic and oratorical postures while delivering his speech. At the end his inspiration leaves him all of a sudden and he finishes with the trite remark—"That's how it is on this bitch of an earth." In reality Pozzo is only parrotting what he learnt from Lucky in the old days. It seems that here and there he forgets his set speech and makes up the deficiency with his own words. It is at such times that we have the stage direction about his speaking prosaically or his inspiration deserting him. Later,

Pozzo hints to Estragon and Vladimir to praise his speech and they do so. He admits that he grew a little weak towards the end of his speech but they assure him that it was nothing very perceptible. It is to reward the tramps' courtesy in praising his speech that Pozzo arranges the entertainment of Lucky's dance and speech for them.

(22)

> *Is there anything I can do, that's what I ask myself, to cheer them up ? I have given them bones, I have talked to them about this and that, I have explained the twilight, admittedly. But is it enough, that's what tortures me, is it enough ?*
>
> (*Act I* : *Page 39*)

Pozzo's speech has been handsomely praised by the tramps at a hint from Pozzo himself that he wants them to do so. Pozzo debates within himself as to how he could reward them for their courtesy. Estragon quite understandably thinks that in view of their obvious poverty Estragon would make a monetary gift to them. So he says that even ten francs would be welcome to them. Later he says that he would accept even five francs. However, Pozzo soon lets them know that he is only thinking of rewarding them by asking his slave, Lucky, to entertain them. Here we find Pozzo thinking aloud about doing something for the tramps in return for the courtesy they have shown him. He wonders if there is anything he can do for them, in order to cheer them up. It is true that he has given them bones. He has also entertained them by talking to them about various things. He has spoken to them poetically about the twilight. Still, he is bothered by the thought whether what he has done for them is quite enough. A little later, Pozzo gives them the choice of a dance by Lucky, a song by him, a recitation by him or a display of his ability to 'think'.

(23)

> *...stark naked in the stockinged feet in Connemara in a word for reasons unknown no matter what matter the facts are there and considering what is more much more grave that in the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman it appears what is more much more grave that in the light the light the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman...*
>
> (*Act I* : *Page 44*)

This is an excerpt from the unpunctuated speech of Lucky which he makes at the orders of his master Pozzo, in order to entertain the tramps with a specimen of his 'thinking'. A remarkable feature of Lucky's speech, especially evident in this extract, is the repetition of certain syllables, words and phrases, e.g. of the words 'the light' in this extract. Here the repetition

creates an almost ironical effect—the labours of the imaginary thinkers are devoid of light rather than rich in it. The stockinged feet in Connemara connect with Estragon's observation, later on, that he would walk bare-footed as Christ did. Since Lucky's speech is not made on any principle of sentences or paragraphs it is not possible to quote any self-sufficient portion of it. The point here emerges about fifteen lines later when Lucky says that in spite of the labours of mankind, and despite the progress achieved in fields such as tennis, the ultimate reality of human life continues to be the skull in Connemara and the hard stones where it lies. Mankind, instead of advancing, has deteriorated steadily. It has shrunk and become wasted like the skull exposed to wind and weather.

(24)

Estragon : *Pale for weariness.*

Vladimir : *Eh?*

Estragon : *Of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us.*

(*Act I* : *Page 52*)

The long wait of Act I is over. The boy, Godot's messenger, has left after delivering the message that Godot is unable to come this evening but that they may expect to meet him tomorrow. As the boy leaves, evening at once gives place to night. A pale moon becomes visible and its pale light suffuses the scene. Estragon places his boots down on the stage and begins to look at the moon. Vladimir asks him what he is doing. Estragon's reply forms the given extract.

Quoting from a poem of Shelley, Estragon says that the moon is pale because of weariness. (In Shelley's poem the paleness of the moon is attributed to its weariness because of constant climbing in the sky and wandering companionless among stars that have a different birth.) Vladimir has perhaps not been able to understand the allusion. Estragon does not explain it but quotes another half-line from the same poem, to which he adds some words of his own, *viz*. "and gazing on the likes of us". We recall the tramps' earlier conversation during which Estragon disclosed that he was once a poet.

(25)

Vladimir : *Christ! What's Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!*

Estragon : *All my life I've compared myself to him.*

(*Act I* : *Page 52*)

As the tramps prepare to leave the stage at the end of Act I, Vladimir asks Estragon as to what he is going to do with his boots. Estragon replies that he would just leave them behind. Vladimir reminds him that he would then have to go barefooted. Estragon replies that Christ also walked barefooted. Vladimir is shocked at the implied comparison and the present exchange ensues.

Vladimir resents Estragon's mention of Christ and asks Estragon, incredulously, whether he is going to compare himself with Christ. Estragon's reply is to say that he has been doing so all his life. Vladimir is perhaps too shocked to make a direct comment on this, but says instead that the physical surroundings of Estragon are different from those of Christ. Christ lived in a hot and dry country, so he could walk barefooted without much discomfort. On the other hand, he implies, Estragon is living in a cold and humid country where walking without boots would make a person fall ill. Estragon points out another difference between his situation and that of Christ—the latter was crucified quickly. The implication is that Estragon's life is equivalent to a process of slow crucifixion.

(26)

Estragon : *Don't touch me ! Don't question me ! Don't speak to me ! Stay with me !*

Vladimir : *Did I ever leave you ?*

Estragon : *You let me go.*

(Act II : Page 58)

Vladimir has been singing a sad song about a dog who steals a crust of bread and is beaten to death by the cook. In the meanwhile Estragon also arrives there. Noticing him, Vladimir says that he would like to embrace his friend. Estragon is unhappy and irritated and says that he would like his friend either to touch him, speak to him, or question him. Only he should stay by his side and not desert him. Vladimir says that he has never deserted his friend but always stood by him. Estragon complains that he indirectly deserted him by letting him go. Estragon and Vladimir then embrace and clap each other on the back.

(27)

Vladimir : *I missed you...and at the same time I was happy. Isn't that a queer thing ?*

Estragon : *(Shocked). Happy ?*

Vladimir : *Perhaps it's not the right word.*

Estragon : *And now ?*

Vladimir : *Now ?...(Joyous.) There you are again... (Indifferent.) There we are again...(Gloomy.) There I am again.*

(Act II : Page 59)

When Estragon enters the stage at the opening of Act II he finds that Vladimir is singing a song. The former is depressed to see that his absence seems to have made a change for the better for Vladimir; who admits, moreover, that he is in great form and even his kidneys are now giving him less trouble. Estragon remarks sadly that even Vladimir's kidneys function better when he is away.

Vladimir admits that he missed Estragon, but that, at the same time, he did feel happy. He realizes that the combination of these contradictory feelings is a queer thing. Estragon says nothing about Vladimir's missing him but expresses shock at his disclosure that he felt happy during his friend's absence. Vladimir amends his statement to say that happiness is perhaps not the right word to describe his state of mind during his absence. Estragon wants to know how Vladimir feels, now that he has come back. Vladimir replies that he is delighted that his friend has returned. He is less enthusiastic at the two of them being together once again, and far less happy at his own condition now that his friend is back.

(28)

Estragon : ***What am I to say ?***

Vladimir : ***Say, I am happy.***

Estragon : ***I am happy.***

Vladimir : ***So am I.***

Estragon : ***So am I.***

Vladimir : ***We are happy.***

(Act II : Page 60)

Vladimir suggests that in his heart of hearts Estragon also must be happy that he is back again with his friend. Estragon asks Vladimir if he really thinks so. The latter observes that Estragon must say so even if it is not true. At Vladimir's suggestion he says that he is happy. Vladimir himself repeats the same remark. Then both of them make the same statement about themselves jointly.

Happiness is so much out of the reach of the tramps that they can only pretend to be happy. Moreover, they must keep themselves busy in conversation, any conversation, whether what is being said is significant or trivial, sincere or hypocritical. It may be noted that although Estragon complies with Vladimir's suggestion about saying that he is happy, he soon undermines Vladimir's make-believe.

Pretending to be happy does not change the condition of the tramps. As, Estragon says, "what are we to do now, now that we are happy ?" And even Vladimir has to admit that their situation still remains the same—"Wait for Godot".

(29)

Estragon : (*Suddenly furious*). *Recognize* ! *What is there to recognize* ? *All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud* ! *And you talk to me about scenery* ! (*Looking wildly about him*.) *Look at this muckheap* ! *I've never stirred from it* !

Vladimir : *Calm yourself, calm yourself.*

(*Act II* : *Page 61*)

Vladimir tries his level best to remind Estragon that they waited for Godot at the same place yesterday but Estragon cannot remember anything. Vladimir argues that Estragon must certainly be able to recognize the place as the same as the one where they waited the previous day. However, Estragon completely misunderstands Vladimir and answers as though he had been asked something about the scenic beauty of the place. Getting irritated, he says that there is nothing in the place which should enable him to 'recognize' it. He adds that he has spent all his miserable life crawling about in the mud and Vladimir is talking to him about landscapes. He points to the dirty surroundings and claims that he has never been anywhere else except at this heap of filth. Vladimir tries to help him recall that there was a time when both of them lived and worked in the beautiful Macon country.

(30)

But we were there together, I could swear to it ! *Picking grapes for a man called*...(*he snaps his fingers*)...*can't think of the name of the man, at a place called*...(*snaps his fingers*) ...*can't think of the name of the place, do you not remember* ?

(*Act II* : *Page 62*)

Estragon expresses a doubt whether they are waiting for Godot at the right place. Vladimir remarks that Estragon should be easily able to recognise it, for it is quite different from the Macon country where they used to live together a long time back. Estragon is annoyed that Vladimir should mention the Macon country. He denies that he ever lived there. At this Vladimir tries to make him recall those days.

Vladimir reminds Estragon that when they both lived in the Macon country they used to pick grapes for a certain man whose name, unfortunately, he is unable to recall, in spite of his best efforts. He adds that they used to work at a place called—but he is unable to recollect even that name. He asks Estragon to help him recall the

names, but the latter states that he did not notice things particularly enough to retain a memory of them. Vladimir's loss of memory annoys him a great deal and he expresses this annoyance by snapping his fingers. Forgetfulness is a pervasive condition in *Waiting for Godot*.

(31)

Estragon	:	*They talk about their lives.*
Vladimir	:	*To have lived is not enough for them.*
Estragon	:	*They have to talk about it.*
Vladimir	:	*To be dead is not enough for them.*
Estragon	:	*It is not sufficient.*

(*Act II : Page 63*)

Vladimir and Estragon have come to the conclusion that they are so much given to talking that it is impossible for them to remain quiet for any length of time; therefore, they must think of some topic on which they continue talking. One of them adds that they talk not only because they like it but also because it saves them from the ordeal of thinking. They agree that there are many reasons which impel them to talk endlessly.

One such reason is that talking saves them from hearing voices. These are, as Estragon says, "all the dead voices". It appears that these are the 'voices' of their dead thoughts, that is, memories of what they once thought they would do. Such recollections would make them feel miserable, so they take the preventive action of talking all the time, so that their minds do not dwell on memories of the past. This is one of the most poetic exchanges between the two tramps. In the present extract they seem to be saying that it is sufficient for a thought to have enjoyed existence and vitality for howsoever short a period it might have been, but some thoughts clamour for recognition later on also. Dead thoughts should lie quietly in their graves, but some thoughts are insistent; they want recognition even of the way they passed out of mental existence.

(32)

Vladimir	:	*This evening...I was saying...I way saying...*
Estragon	:	*I'm not a historian.*
Vladimir	:	*Wait...we embraced...we were happy...happy... what do we do now that we're happy...go on waiting...waiting...let me think...it's coming... go on waiting...now that we're happy...let me see...ah! The tree!*

(*Act II : Page 65*)

Having exhausted one topic, that about the voices of the dead, the two tramps must now find some other subject to talk about. Vladimir says that if only he could remember what he had been saying earlier in the evening, he would be able to go on from there. Estragon retorts that he is not a historian that he should remember what was said by them earlier in the evening, implying thereby that the happenings of the evening are for him a matter of the past now. Vladimir gradually recalls all the happenings of the evening. They first embraced and then declared that they were happy. Then one of them asked what they were to do now that they were happy and the other answered that they must wait for Godot as before. They must go on waiting even though they were happy. Here Vladimir asks Estragon to wait a little when he would be able to recall the rest of the happenings also. But he suddenly exclaims 'The Tree!' Estragon cannot note anything unusual about the tree. Vladimir explains that the tree was quite bare the previous evening but there are now some leaves growing on it.

(33)

Estragon : *Oh...this and that, I suppose, nothing in particular.* **(With assurance.)** *Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That's been going on now for half a century.*

Vladimir : *You don't remember any fact, any circumstance ?*

(*Act II : Page 66*)

Estragon refuses to believe Vladimir that the two of them waited for Godot at the same place the previous evening. Vladimir asks him to specify, in that case, where they were the previous evening and how they passed the time. Estragon replies that they could have been in any other compartment of the void. Estragon is sure that they must have passed the time in talking about this and that, about nothing in particular, that is to say, as they have been doing for the last fifty years. In fact he asserts that he is sure that this is how they passed the time last evening. Vladimir asks him if he cannot remember anything more definite than what he has said. Estragon becomes annoyed and asks Vladimir not to trouble him.

(34)

Vladimir : (*Stupefied*). *Not yours* !

Estragon : *Mine were black. These are brown.*

Vladimir : *You're sure yours were black ?*

Estragon : *Well, they were a kind of grey.*

(*Act II : Page 67*)

The crowning argument that Vladimir can think of giving in order to prove that he and Estragon waited there last evening, is to remind Estragon that he left his boots behind on the last occasion. Estragon has no boots on at the moment, and Vladimir shows him a pair of boots lying in front of them, triumphantly maintaining that they are Estragon's. Estragon has a look at them and denies that they are his. He maintains that his were black whereas these are brown. Vladimir pointedly asks Estragon whether his boots were black and the latter admits that they were of an indeterminate grey colour. Estragon admits that the boots in front of them are not really brown, they are rather of an indeterminate greenish colour. However, Estragon proves that the boots are not his by trying them on : his boots were too tight, but these fit him, in fact they are a little too big for his feet. Vladimir tries to justify himself by suggesting that these boots were left behind by someone who found that Estragon's boots fitted him better.

(35)

Estragon : *Let's go.*

Vladimir : *We can't.*

Estragon : *Why not* ?

Vladimir : *We're waiting for Godot.*

Estragon : *Ah ! (Pause. Despairing.) What'll we do, what'll we do !*

(*Act II* : *Page 68*)

Estragon is unable to figure out Vladimir's suggestion that somebody took away Estragon's boots (which were too tight for Estragon himself) because they fitted him better and left behind his own, which seem to fit Estragon better than his own. It does not occur to him that the solution is that the stranger's boots were much too big for him, so he exchanged them for a smaller pair. Exhausted with the mental effort, Estragon once again suggests that they should leave. As before, Vladimir tells him that they cannot leave. Estragon wants to know why not. Vladimir reminds him that they are waiting for Godot. Estragon remembers sadly that their situation does not admit of leaving, and he laments over their helplessness.

(36)

Vladimir : *Curse me* !

Estragon : (*After reflection*). *Naughty* !

Vladimir : *Stronger* !

Estragon : *Gonococcus* ! *Spirochaete* !

Vladimir sways back and forth, doubled in two.

Vladimir : *Tell me to think.*

(*Act II* : *Page 73*)

Finding no other way of passing the time, Vladimir suggests that they should play the game of Pozzo and Lucky. Estragon says that he has never heard of the game. Vladimir explains that Estragon should pretend to be Pozzo, while Vladimir will play the part of Lucky. To begin with, he suggests that Estragon should curse him as Pozzo cursed Lucky. Estragon thinks hard for some time and the only curse he can manage is to call Vladimir 'naughty'. Vladimir tells him to come out with something stronger. This time Estragon uses two novel terms of abuse, Gonococcus and Spirochaete. The two words denote species of bacteria, the first causing gonorrhoea and the second causing a number of diseases including syphilis. In the meanwhile, Vladimir sways one way and another on his feet, his body almost doubled up. He is either trying to imitate the swaying of Lucky as he goes to sleep while still on his feet, or perhaps he is behaving like this because he is feeling great pain. Going on with the game, he asks Estragon that he should demand that Vladimir should think, just as Pozzo asked Lucky to entertain the tramps with his thinking. Estragon does so, but he is unable to go along with Vladimir when the latter asks him to order that he should dance, as Pozzo did with Lucky. Vladimir is not discouraged by this lack of cooperation. He himself plays both the roles, first of Pozzo and then of Lucky, but he discovers that in the meanwhile his friend has left the stage.

(37)

Vladimir : *I interrupted you.*

Estragon : *On the contrary.*

They glare at each other angrily.

Vladimir : *Ceremonious ape !*

Estragon : *Punctilious pig !*

Vladimir : *Finish your phrase, I tell you !*

Estragon : *Finish your own !*

(*Act II* : *Page 75*)

Estragon comes rushing back to the stage, after having left it, claiming that 'they' are coming. Vladimir at first tries to convince him that it must be Godot, but Estragon does not feel relieved. He seems to think that it must be the people who beat him every night. Vladimir begins to share his apprehensions and advises him to hide himself behind the tree. Estragon tries to do so but the tree is too small to afford a hiding-place. However, nobody comes for quite sometime. Vladimir suggests that Estragon must have seen a vision. This sparks off a quarrel. After a brief silence, each of them, turning to the other, wishes to say something. They in fact speak exactly the same words—"Do you—" Then they realise the situation. Each asks the other to complete his sentence first. It is

out of this insistence on courtesy that they begin calling each other names. The charge, in each case, is that the other is too formal and ceremonious. It is interesting that in this fit of exaggerated courtesy they become so seriously involved that they begin to glare at each other in anger. Suddenly, Estragon has a brilliant brain-wave. "That's the idea", he says, "let's abuse each other". At this another outburst of highly original terms of abuse takes place.

(38)

> *What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come—*
>
> *(Act II : Page 80)*

Estragon and Vladimir are debating whether they should help Pozzo rise to his feet. Vladimir thinks they must do so, for there are not many opportunities for them to offer their services usefully. He feels that even in the animal kingdom one member of the race comes to the help of the other, and if he cannot help he quietly disappears from the scene. He does not stand there and debate the pros and cons of the thing. However, Vladimir, the speaker, says that the real question is a different one ; it is not about Pozzo but about themselves.

Vladimir thinks that he and Estragon are in a singularly fortunate position. All around them there is absolute confusion and lack of purpose. They, however, know precisely why they are there—they are waiting to meet Godot. Vladimir is very much impressed with this aspect of their situation, though, of course, his satisfaction is not without conscious irony. This comes out clearly when Estragon gives a suddenly unexpected reply to Vladimir's question as to how many people have the good fortune of keeping their appointment. Estragon's deflating reply is—"Billions".

(39)

> *Vladimir* : **(*Reassuring*).** *It's evening, sir, it's evening, night is drawing nigh. My friend here would have me doubt it and I must confess he shook me for a moment. But it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day and I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory.*
>
> *(Act II : Page 85)*

Pozzo has asked the tramps what time it is. Vladimir replies that it must be seven or eight o'clock. Pozzo wants to know whether it is evening. Vladimir says it is, but Estragon objects that the sun is not setting but rising. Vladimir is shaken for a moment but

then replies confidently that it is evening now, for he has lived through the whole long day, and he can affirm now that the day is at the end of its tricks.

(40)

> *It's abominable ! When ! When ! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you ?* (Calmer.) *They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.*
>
> (*Act II* : *Page 89*)

Vladimir asks Pozzo as to when Lucky became dumb. He has already been asked about when he himself went blind. Pozzo is irritated at these references to time. He seems to have reached a stage when the concept of external time is irrelevant. He chides Estragon about teasing him with all these references to time. For Pozzo it is enough to say that he became blind one day, and that Lucky became deaf one day. Specification of time is unnecessary, according to him. All times, all moments are alike, they are even the same. The moment of death is the same as the moment of birth, the two take place simultaneously. Becoming a little calmer, Pozzo speaks aphoristically. Human life is extremely brief. Humanity is born astride a grave, that is to say, from the womb the child falls straightaway into the grave. Later Vladimir repeats these words, adding that the surgeon assisting at the birth is also the sexton who digs the grave. The moment of birth and the moment of death are thus identical and simultaneous.

18

Select Literary Criticism

(1)

Pessimism and Optimism

To inquire whether *Godot* is a drama situated beyond extinction is to ask whether the sentence which the author imposes upon his characters is such as to silence their meaning. The balance of optimism in tragedy is the extent to which a human affirmation exceeds the assertion of a human jeopardy : it is only when blinded that Oedipus asserts the full vision of a man. The pessimism of Ionesco demands the destruction of more than the physical human, since it defines the antihuman as that which can silence even the resonance of the human being against which it is matched. One may assert a world in which man can no longer make even the most limited assertion, but that view cannot find expression in the theatre because its viability requires acceptance by the spectator of an essentially anthropocentric construct. Moreover, the antihuman incarnation of Ionesco derives its strength through specialization—it is the personal fate of only a single victim. Ionesco's drama supposes a victim suited to the manifestation of an absolute force that operates within narrow limits. There is no assurance that the spectator may provide such an ideal victim.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(2)

Pity and Terror

Aristotlean tragedy allowed between spectator and protagonist only the residual human bonds of pity and terror. In a drama whose terror pales with the awareness of the monster's limitation, the sardonic cheerfulness of the author dissipates what is left of the human illusion. The elimination of pity mutes within the spectator the last echo of a human evidence. Although terror and pity suppose two different reactions by the spectator (the god's eye being, in the first instance, that of an impersonal divinity ; in the second that of a kindred spectator), both are reactions to a strictly human

dilemma. Until his epiphany makes him godlike, the protagonist of classical tragedy does not accept the dictates of the gods (excluding. of course, the protagonist of a religious play, such as *Antigone*). During the time of his ignorance, he acts as if he were able to assert himself; in his ultimate lucidity, he does. Even in the moment of tragic irony, *he* is not the one who falters; it is *the spectator*, who rises above the action. Such a protagonist is seldom divorced from his own humanity or the spectator's.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(3)

Ionesco and Beckett

Until the second incarnation of Berenger there is no epiphany for the people of Ionesco; they are innocents to the last. For those waiting for Godot, there is no revelation either—they are bitterly wise from the start. Each of these people is cut adrift. But the Irish playwright does not consider the fate of his characters with the same equanimity as Ionesco; this supposes an even more intensely pessimistic view of the human dimension –and a converse ability to view the human dimension of the stage with considerably more optimism, even though the world of Beckett does not undergo the degeneration from innocence to doom that marks the progress of Ionesco's action. Beckett's world is doomed at birth. It is a parodic symbol that denotes the same impotence as that of its people. It is flat (a board, a platter, and so on), sterile and lonely: the single tree and its token seasons suggest its climate and topography. Its colour is gray, that minimal tolerance of light insufficient to indicate the absence of colour; the sky is alternately overcast or lit by a moon that is "pale with weariness". The hopelessness of every endeavour, the failure of every impulse turns the spiritual horizon dim and toneless, and the mimetic objects are similarly affected—the shoes of Estragon are degraded from an imagined brilliance (black or yellow) to the hazy middle region of gray. What colour there is portends the cadaver, the greenishness of decay.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(4)

Contrast With Ionesco

The world of Ionesco assaults, this one exhausts; both kill, the first by assertion, the second through silence. The world of Ionesco is constantly more full of objects, that of Beckett is a self-perpetuating desert. In the way of an isolation cell, it is bare of anything at which the prisoner might clutch. The toy monsters of Ionesco rely on the good will of the spectator. The wastelands of Beckett extend into the conscience of the spectators; he is a more universally terrifying author than is Ionesco.

The world of Ionesco is a becoming. The threat is preposited in *Godot*. It is a prison now, and it has been a prison as long as memory can extend. Estragon has no past- it is all he can do to endure the present. Vladimir tries to awaken in him the memory of school days : was school godless ? Estragon does not know whether or not it was godless. Vladimir concludes : "You must be confusing it with prison."

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(5)

Stillness and Stagnation

Decay results from too long a stillness ; it is the evidence of cumulative frustration. In this drama of stagnation, what once was life is now putrefaction. The social fibre of these people has worn out : they are tramps. Their clothes are in shreds, their shoes are decomposing. So are they—they smell. Pozzo asks, "Which one of you smells so badly ?" The answer is given by the realist, Estragon : "He has stinking breath and I have stinking feet." That putrefaction is the only evidence of their existence. In order to bring back the memory of their first encounter with Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir reverts to physical proof : "Pull up your trousers...There's the wound ! Beginning to fester !" The festering is Vladimir's triumphant evidence of continuity. As this is a play, the necessary extension of which is a spectator, that putiescence extends to the latter. In attempting to find his bearings, Vladimir surveys the meaningless landmarks that inevitably include the audience and, as is his custom, he turns to metaphor (even by inadvertence) : "You recognize the place ?......that tree......(*turning towards auditorium*) that bog......"

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(6)

The Difficulty of Dying

If this metaphysical attrition is absolute, if there is no place to turn, nothing to grasp, death is the only answer. Repeatedly, Estragon assumes a "uterine position". But since death would be a way out, and there is in fact no way out, death fails him. Suicide is often attempted, always unsuccessfully ; night never actually comes ; Godot is never more real than a broken promise. Beckett balances his people on the outermost ledge of being, but never gives them the comfort of oblivion : he has achieved the litotes of tragedy, the horror of being—beside which death pales.

Merely surmising birth, but assuming a continual dying (though never death), Beckett peoples an agony of being, an unrelieved topography of gray which now signifies the minimal tolerance of life compatible with suffering. The nightmare

overspreads this comatose world drained of colour and void of levels and reduces to semantics the distinctions between day and night, between walking and the fitful moments of sleep. It is the evidence of a world in which, by fiat, nothing happens and in which attempted action is at most a brief heresy, something doomed that makes the silence appear for a moment as an ironic commentary. It is the substance of a play that neither starts nor ends, whose talk (its only evidence) is a circle constantly coming to a close, be it in abortive speculation such as that recited by Lucky, in jokes whose punch line is forever missing, in story-telling rondelets that end with the incident of their beginning. All growth is stunted. Vertical development is replaced by a circular motive connoting the failure of assertion and a void.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(7)

Absence of Myth

It is both madness and cowardice to allow the slightest myth to develop on this barren ground. Every statement, because it is a statement, is a lie in this world that voids the statement and mocks the most rudimentary attempts at existence. The dull-wittedness of Estragon is his fundamental consonance ; contrary to Vladimir, he refuses to allow the parody of an intellectual illusion to develop on this desert. It is he ("aphoristic for once") who speaks that lesson as a commentary on Vladimir's more sustained philosophical speculations : "We are all born mad. Some remain so." The human intent has been frustrated so long that existence itself is doubted as an intellectual apprehension. Vladimir is warily pessimistic : "So there you are again." But Estragon has proceeded beyond even a mood : "You really think so ?" His question is rhetorical but not humorous.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(8)

Godot and Endgame

In *Waiting for Godot* two characters pass the time waiting by playing game on the open road. In his second play *Endgame* two characters play the final game shut up in a room. Here a blind old man, Hamm, sits in a wheelchair (he cannot stand) waited on by his servant Clov, (who cannot sit down) ; in the room also, in dustbins, are Hamm's legless parents Nagg and Nell. The world outside is dead, or at least these four people believe they are the last survivors of the race after some great catastrophe. Although Clov hates Hamm, he must obey his orders, and the basic question of the play (its plot, one might say) is whether or not Clov will

muster enough will-power to leave Hamm, who will then die (and so will Clov—and since supplies have run out the question is irrelevant). Like *Waiting for Godot* this play has been variously interpreted, even as a biographical treatment embodying the relationship between Joyce and Beckett. The sense of deadness is remarkably consistent, lightened only by the possible vision of a small boy who has been, for some reason, given less prominence in the English translation. In the French version this little boy, a 'potential creator' contemplates his navel, 'that is, he fixed his attention on the great emptiness of Nirvana', of which Democritus the Abderite has said, in one of Beckett's favourite quotations, "Nothing is more real than nothing."

—*Arnold P. Hinchliffe*

(9)

Beckett's Language

If Beckett devalues language, he continues to use it and, bilingually, to show a mastery of it. With such success, moreover, that Bamber Gascoigne, discussing twentieth-century poetic drama, concludes that it turns out to be written in prose : *Waiting for Godot*. For want of a better tool, language has been moulded into an instrument for naming the unnameable, and Esslin concludes that this recognition of absurdity is once more the starting-point of exhilaration and freedom : "For to know nothing is nothing, not to want to know anything likewise, but to be beyond knowing anything, that is when peace enters, to the soul of the incurious seeker." It might, for most of us, however, be the peace that passeth all understanding, were it not for the central paradox of Beckett's work.

—*Arnold P. Hinchliffe*

(10)

Beckett's Heroes

Beckett's first hero (and subsequent heroes reflect him) takes his name Belaqua from the lute-makers of Florence and friend of Dante found on that lonely plain where souls wait lost to this world, but not yet ready to enter purgatory : a place of blankness, indolence and indecision. *More Kicks than Pricks* (1934) traces, in ten short stories, the career of this Belacqua Shuah through three marriages to his accidental death and solemn burial. This is a hero for whom idleness is a positive statement of existence, and the heroes that follow subscribe to the basic maxim—taught by the Sicilian rhetorician, Gorgias of Lentini (483-375 B.C.)—that nothing has any real existence, and if anything really did exist it could not be known, and that if anything were to exist and be known it could not be expressed in speech. Critics (such as F. J. Hoffman in

Samuel Beckett : The Language of Self, 1962) who trace Beckett's inheritance from literature rather than philosophy, and see his heroes evolving out of Dostoevsky and Kafka—for example Gregor Samsa in Kafka's tale 'Metamorphosis' who literally shrinks into an insect *becoming* what he fears he is—arrive at the same conclusion. Dostoevsky's Underground Man (the hero of *Notes from the Underground*; 1864) becomes Kafka's insect, becomes finally, the non-hero of Beckett. But, and here is the paradox, all Beckett's heroes, writing about self-definition, 'invoke a language of careful and even arduous inquiry ; they are precise almost beyond the decent limits of precision'. It is this rational mind which is as much a cause of obscurity as the meaninglessness of the world since the heroes insist upon acting as logical beings, although logic must tell them the absurdity of such behaviour. In this Beckett differs from Ionesco, who exploits the surface realities and Joyce who gloried in language and erudition. Beckett, rejects learning and rejects language as part of the failure to know where and what we are, an impenetrable barrier. Thus Beckett's heroes not only deny that they are philosophers, they positively flaunt an ignorance of philosophy yet remain perpetually concerned with questions that have been problems since pre-Socratic times : the nature of Self, the world, and God. Moreover, by divorcing these heroes from social situations, Beckett can never force them, as the heroes of Camus and Sartre are forced, to a moment of decision so that we have the distinct impression......that Beckett's people have collapsed under the burden of choice, responsibility and anguish, that an existentialist world, which they take for granted, exposes them to.

—*Arnold P. Hinchliffe*

(11)

Beckett and Proust

The one undeniable influence on Beckett—beginning in 1931 with the publication of an essay—was Proust, whose work reveals those themes which preoccupy Beckett : the tyrannies of time and language which hinder an awareness of self : "How am 'I', an a-temporal being imprisoned in time and space, to escape from my imprisonment, when I *know* that outside time and space lies nothing, and that 'I' in the ultimate depths of my reality, am Nothing also ?" This question leads to others found in Proust—the discontinuity of personality, the necessary solitude of the artist and the belief that suffering is the one force powerful enough to establish the identity of Self. But, again, some questions cannot even be formulated, and these are the questions Beckett begins to try and ask in *Murphy* : questions we must fumblingly express as : what am I, what are time and space, mind and matter ? Beckett's heroes are determined to answer these questions and not by taking refuge in mysticism. This insistence on rationalism sets Beckett apart from the Absurdists. As Coe put it "The Absurd" is a method which proceeds, by

means of annihilation and rational concepts, to a point where the ultimate reality, irrational by definition, may be glimpsed through the wreckage. But Beckett, by contrast, cherishes rationality above all things, but drives it to the point at which......reason itself is transmuted into the still vaster reality of the irrational."

—*Arnold P. Hinchliffe*

(12)

Beckett's Characters

This action (?) of waiting is reflected in the dialogue which can be recognised as the absurd efforts of a Sisyphus who remains a prisoner of the endless fiction he produces. And it is an ambiguous action. Waiting may be heroic (in that to wait implies that a personality has been maintained long enough for waiting to be possible which in our present condition is heroic) or it may be something worse than foolish, a linguistic illusion. Like the plays, the argument for waiting is circular : we are, therefore we wait, therefore we wait *for* something, therefore we are. Thus 'Godot' may be nothing but a name for a life which pointlessly misinterprets itself and the language by which it expresses that falsification. ...Merely because Beckett's characters *are*, they wait, and commentators often borrow Heidegger's term 'Geworfenheit' to describe this. But Beckett's heroes are not as heroic as that ; the fact that they have been 'thrown into' the world is not, for them, a beginning of action or decision. They champion the theory that even in a meaningless situation life must have a meaning. Beckett presents an inability in man to be nihilist, not nihilism.

Yet these fools 'looking, with inadequate strength, on a wrong road for a goal that perhaps does not exist,' compel compassion. The tone, at least in his early writing, is one of farce, and we do not mean the chamber-pot or bedroom comedy. Farce as a vehicle that contains all human sadness allows us to feel with and for Beckett's clowns even as they are detached from us. In much of Beckett's work the tone means more than meaning, and it is this warmth which denies the metaphysician the last word, and qualifies absurdity.

—*Arnold P. Hinchliffe*

(13)

First Impression

At first sight, Beckett took the easy way in his *Waiting for Godot*, first produced in France in January 1953, in England in August 1955. He dispenses with Woman and quite definitely with *Amour-Passion.* Man is whittled down to essentials and perhaps beyond them. God is a question-mark to which we shall have to

return, but it can be said at once, to borrow the title of one of Beckett's earlier works, that if existent he seems a source of more pricks than kicks. As to Nature, she is represented by a single tree, bare in the first act and sprouting a few leaves in the Second, as though to show that in the vegetable kingdom at least some life still stirs.

Before this tree, the sole scenery, two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, converse and perform various restricted movements while awaiting the arrival of a certain Mr. Godot, with whom they have an appointment in this vaguely desolate place. They are on the stage for the entire two acts of a play which runs for about one and a half hours. Diversions are provided by the entrance in both acts of Pozzo, a seedy landowner accompanied by his slave, Lucky, and by two appearances of a messenger-boy, or boys, to tell them each time that Godot will not come this evening, 'but surely tomorrow'. They consider hanging themselves, but their only rope is the piece of cord which holds up Estragon's trousers and it is not strong enough. At the final curtain they stand facing the audience and uttering the words: "Let's go," but in fact they remain motionless.

To strip down action, situation, emotion and characterisation as far as this is, for the dramatist, the equivalent of clearing out a houseful of old lumber, leaving the way open for a fresh start. But this freedom from inherited complications is only superficial and, even if real, it would not make the playwright's task easier. Racine's remark that the hardest thing of all is to make something out of nothing applies forcibly here—even if nothing, with its formidable new connotations, is no longer the artistically barren field it once seemed.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(14)

Comparative Bareness

Waiting for Godot, however, is scenically and emotionally bare only in comparison with the lushness of earlier drama, of which Claudel's was an outstanding example. The stripping-down process can go much further, as Beckett himself went to prove in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. What must be nearly the ultimate is reached in his novel *How It Is*, whose crippled 'characters' crawl painfully along face downward in the mud and communicate by jabs with a tin-opener. Compared to any of these, Vladimir and Estragon are highly articulate entities possessed of an almost quivering sensitivity. They are bound together by the sub-type of love variously known as fraternity, comradeship or solidarity. It shows in Vladimir's maternal or nurselike solicitude for Estragon and in Estragon's dependence on Vladimir. The nurse-child relationship is emphasised by Estragon's resentment of it, by the several attempts he makes

to break free. But at the approach of the others, mysterious and hostile, he runs back for protection, which Vladimir readily gives. This fraternity, though largely a defensive feeling sustained by the terror of loneliness has not in this play become mechanical. It rests on a real psychological need and is more than the product of habituation.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(15)

Pity and Anger

Pity is also experienced spontaneously. When Pozzo first appears, driving before him the miserable Lucky, laden with baggage and with a rope round his neck, they are full of compassion for the pale, exhausted creature. They are even indignant against his master. It is true that, after Lucky has kicked one of them and Pozzo has explained how sorely tried he is by his servant's tiresome behaviour, the direction of their sympathies turns abruptly. But they have shown themselves capable of pity and indignation, even if they are not quite sure where to apply them. They are still more incapable of unhappiness, while maintaining that happiness does not exist or that they themselves have never experienced it. So conscious are they of their suffering that they continually protest against it. Estragon is particularly vocal.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(16)

Waiting

In short, these imperfectly heartless hobos, contemporaries as they may have been of the Beat Generation, have progressed only a certain way beyond the Romantics in the direction of total nihilism. To go the whole way, Weltschmerz should not be *experienced*, but ignored, or at most parodied. Their parody lacks conviction. Unlike Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*, they still retain enough remnants of hope to be tormented by despair. And in place of hope as a dynamic they have expectancy. This is the main motif of the play, spelt out in the title, which in an earlier version was simply '*Waiting*'.

The two tramps are in a place and mental state in which nothing happens and time stands still. Their main preoccupation is to 'pass the time' as well as possible until night comes and they can go. They realize the futility of their exercises and they are merely filling up the hours with pointless activity. In this sense, their 'waiting' is mechanical ; it is the same thing as not moving. In another sense, it is an obligation. They have to remain where they are, though they resent doing so and would like to leave. This

might be called a moral obligation since it involves the possibilities of punishment and reward. If Godot comes, as he has given them to understand that he may, a new factor may be introduced into their existence, whereas if they leave they will certainly miss him. Their waiting, therefore, however cynical they may be about it, contains a certain element of hope.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(17)

Features of Waiting for Godot

More than any other dramatist of this 'school,' Beckett dispenses with plot. As Esslin remarks, *Waiting for Godot* does not tell a story, it explores a static situation : "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful. Even the apparent differences between Act I and Act II only serve to emphasise the essential sameness of the situation. The dialogue makes the customary use of music-hall patter and mime, and the title introduces implications which cannot be dismissed as accidental. Since Beckett's care for language is notorious, he must deliberately have allowed a French nonsense word, with its implications, to stand in the English translation, and therefore the suggestion of Godot is as permissible as is the suggestion that the word could refer to Godeau, the racing cyclist, echo Simone Weil's *Attente de Dieu* (*Waiting for God*) and contain, as Eric Bentley has suggested, an allusion to Balzac's comedy *Le Faiseur*, usually known as *Mercadet*, after the speculator who explains his financial difficulties by blaming them on his former partner Godeau, who absconded with their joint capital and who does return at the end of the play with a huge fortune, which, miraculously, saves the situation. The story of the two thieves appears early in the play ; these two male factors happened to be present at a unique opportunity for salvation—one of them made a hostile remark and was damned, the other happened to contradict him and was saved. Chance exclamations damn or save, and this is matched by the unpredictability of Godot as reported by the boy (or boys ?). Hope of salvation *is* a *subject* of the play, but, Esslin asks, does this mean that it is a Christian play ? May not this very hope of salvation which we find in the play be an act of Bad Faith, a refusal on our part to face the reality, that there is no Godot, and by believing that there is, to avoid our responsibilities by simply waiting.

—*Arnold P. Hinchliffe*

(18)

Comic Elements

Godot is more than half comic. The dialogue is funny and the overall tone of any production must reflect this. Let us suppose

that Vladimir and Estragon, instead of merely testing the cord which holds up Estragon's trousers by pulling on it and neatly falling backwards, got as far as attaching it to the tree and round the neck of one of them. The cord would still break, the half-strangled tramp would still look grotesque, the bungled hanging would make a riotously funny scene. Within the atmosphere of *Godot* as it is, a more 'serious' development would be inconceivable. The attempted suicide would excite the same kind of laughter, by slightly more brutal means, as that actually aroused by the rest of the play. If the characters were strongly objectified one would call this 'cruel' comedy ; if strongly identified with the audience, 'bitter' comedy. In fact, the play is usually classed in 'comedy of the absurd'.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(19)

Implications

It has particularly bleak implications. The old, light-hearted kind of absurdity was based on a feeling of security, or at least superiority. One could laugh unreservedly at the traditional antics of clowns, such as trying to fill a holed bucket with water, because one knew of a more effective way of doing the same thing. One would fetch a sound buckbt. But in watching Vladimir and Estragon one does not readily think of better alternatives to their awkward actions. The 'absurdity' cannot be abolished by rectification of detail. It embraces the whole situation in which they find themselves—the whole of life and personality—and one must, as spectator, either reject this situation *in toto* and walk out of the theatre, or consent to inclusion in it. In this case, assuming one stays and still laughs—one's laughter ought to have much in common with the anti-tragic guffaws...in relation to *Candide*. And there are indeed several Rabelaisian moments in *Godot*, in spite of attenuations to satisfy the requirements of the Lord Chamberlain. Yet the contemporary laughter at the futility of everything is not exactly the same as Voltairean - or better, perhaps, Swiftian—reaction to conditions of extreme horror. Horror, like disillusionment, appears to have lost its sting—thanks, to quote some of the various explanations given—to habituation, to irreligion, to mass conditioning in insensitivity, to television. The bogy which haunts the world of *Godot* is not horror in any sensational form, but limbo. And it is useless to react against a limbo, as Estragon is inclined to do. Once again, Vladimir appears to represent a sounder attitude. He dare not laugh, because it gives him a pain in the stomach, but he manages to smile, although, as he observes : 'It's not the same thing.'

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(20)

Absurd Element

The 'absurd' element in *Godot* is nihilism sometimes smiling at itself, sometimes being protested against, but almost the whole time presented as the reality. If it is real, the best course is to accept it and not, as did the characters in *Candide*, attempt to make sense of it. Beckett suggests a state of things which is so appalling that it *must* be meaningless. If it had a meaning, it would be unbearably horrible. This is the anti-tragic side of his work, in which human existence is assimilated to the earthquake or the act of God. It is, in fact, another 'natural disaster', and perhaps the greatest of them all.

Whenever this notion dominates (it is not universal in *Godot*) the meaninglessness of meaninglessness must be respected. That is what Beckett's characters, with some difficulty, attempt to do. They silence Lucky, an inverted Pangloss. At least they have the right idea :

Estragon : I'll go and get a carrot.

He does not move.

Vladimir : This is becoming really insignificant.

Estragon : Not enough.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(21)

Vladimir and Estragon

Do audiences recognise Vladimir and Estragon as 'men like ourselves' ? The public were disconcerted by the early productions, uncertain whether to look up, down or straight ahead. The aura of *avant-garde*, which critics tend to interpose like a gauze curtain, helped to blur their vision. Generally, as Beckett's dramatic idiom and ethos became more familiar, the play was able to make a direct impact unmuffled by novelty. In the London production of 1965, ordinary middlebrow audiences from Kensington and Chelsea responded spontaneously both to the gross farcical effects and to the moments of high seriousness which the play contains. The most striking of these occurs near the end when Vladimir, advancing to the front of the stage and fixing the void of the auditorium with eyes lit with a horrible kind of moribund gleam soliloquises :

Vladimir : Was I sleeping, while the others suffered ? Am I sleeping now ? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today ? That with Estragon, my friend, at

> this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (*Estragon, having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again. Vladimir stares at him.*) He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (*Pause.*) Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old The air is full of our cries.

This speech is heard in dead silence, a silence compounded of sympathy and 'awe'. From a logical point of view, it is all wrong, who is poor Vladimir to perceive all this and to express his recognition so articulately? Why does he appropriate Pozzo's grave-birth analogy and alter its basic significance by adding 'lingeringly' and 'We have time to grow old'? Does the man find that life is too long or too short? And who does he think is looking at him? Has he too turned out to be only a wretched moralist, with a theological bias in addition?

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(22)

Tragi-Comedy

Marlowe and Shakespeare were writing tragedy. One cannot say the same of Beckett in *Godot*. This play happens to be 'classed', even if tentatively. In the English edition of 1956 it is subtitled 'a tragi-comedy'. ...In the absence of an authoritative lead, one is left with the tame but probably correct conclusion that *Waiting for Godot* is a tragi-comedy because it combines tragic and comic elements. The former can be recognised at a reading or a performance and they evoke a reaction which is more complex than simple pity. The characters are hardly the 'little men' of the Charlie Chaplin tradition at whom one smiles while feeling sorry for them. They rejoin that human condition which we all take seriously because we recognise it as ours. Yet our response is not simply fear, and even disquiet would seem too strong a term, for what worse thing could happen to them—and, by extension, us—than that has happened already? If Godot does not come they will be left as they are, which at times seems unbearable but is not absolutely so. And if they cracked, what difference would it make? Where could they escape to? One feels that if there were ten more acts they would still be going through the same motions, since there is no line of development open to them.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(23)

Pozzo and the Tramps

Two other figures enter, two other nations, two more ironic iterations "of the same species" (and "made in God's image !" — this exclamation accompanied by "an enormous laugh") : Pozzo, the dark well of human misery, and the hapless Lucky, the former leading the latter on a rope to the market (at Saint-Sauveur, in the original—the Holy Saviour's) in order to sell him. Lucky, the menial, carries the luggage ; Pozzo, the master, a whip. Pozzo is talkative and brutal ; Lucky is dumb but vicious. Reacting according to stereotype, Vladimir is appalled at the treatment to which Pozzo subjects Lucky, but when Estragon tries to wipe Lucky's tears, he is repaid with a stiff kick in the shins. Pozzo accepts things as they are. His illusions are only social. He describes his managerial miseries with sufficient conviction to turn the emotive Vladimir his way (thereby making an incidental comment on the value of Vladimir's emotions) ; he is a believer in the virtue of the managerial rites, the social histrionics, the niceties of formal exchanges, the reality of time. As an added graciousness, he offers his guests a dance by Lucky, the dance of the net, the self-entanglement of man within his circumstances.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(24)

Lucky's Thinking

Lucky also thinks. In a now-famous monologue, he presents the oral counterpart of the dance within the net. The inconclusive thoughts of mankind about its lot are voiced as by a defective record that reproduces even the abortive speculation to severed sentences and repetitive exclamations—fleeting glimpses of a little "personal god" with a white beard, an apathetic divinity, hell on earth as it is in heaven. As the words tumble forth in an increased frenzy, the convulsed thought becomes a chaotic landscape of lifelessness and stones within which Lucky's stream is eventually spent, running dry on the word 'unfinished'. Lucky and Pozzo depart. A messenger announces the postponement of Pozzo's visit : he couldn't come today, he will surely come tomorrow. The sun goes down, and the moon comes up, but the long-awaited night brings no change. The tramps remain as they are ; the curtain comes down on a statement of their immobility.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(25)

The Second Act

The second act is an intentional redundancy. The place is the same, and so is the hour—Pozzo's faith in his waistcoat watch was no

more than a social euphemism. Heels together, toes apart, the Chaplinesque shoes are near the footlights. "The tree has four or five leaves"; a meaninglessly new season confirms the cessation of time. Echoing the circular motif, Vladimir comes on stage singing a ditty that is its own refrain. The two tramps meet and enact once again the myth of human contact, playing out in words the forms of social intercourse. For the unromantic Estragon, all past events have been obliterated, and the effort to make talk becomes painful once again. Their isolation is tainted with the terror of *others*—the human constant at the source of fear. Estragon breaks and sends up a mournful wail to God.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(26)

The Human Situation

The grim present is a mockery of that which defines the human, and the future is a mere continuum. In order to state the suffering of his people, Beckett cannot reduce them to functional organisms adapted to this metaphysical void; he must suppose them ill-adapted. He therefore develops the tenuous image of an antecedent *life*, of a past humanity, somewhere in the hazy realm of memory—a mist-covered image of something lacking in the present. The sands that designate the desert were once seashore (the "sables" of the original) or the life-giver itself—the sea. Developing an inverted Platonism, the present longing constructs the dim archetypes of antecedent phenomena, a fulness remembered, whereby to define the actual void. In order to be more than a statement of facts, the present ugliness must be also the awareness of beauty inalterably dead; the present brutality, the absence of a love formerly possible. And in this macabre farce where dying replaces death, the sweet sorrow of a once-attainable distinction turns to horror the present immortality. Beckett's cosmogony contemplates no future, time does not move forward; instead, his expanding universe of sorrow is ever receding from the nebula of the potential.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(27)

Absence of Possibility

The essential metaphor of *Godot* derives from this demise of possibility. For Estragon and, especially, for Vladimir (the one who finds transitory comfort in imagining), the waiting is not anticipation of something to come but rather of the moment when the cord of memory will be severed at last and they will have attained the nirvana of objects. The people of *Godot*, whatever the nature of their pastime, look ahead to pain with the sharpness of their reason, rather

than backward to the source of their desire ; that is why Beckett has been able to contrive a mood of nostalgia that excludes sentimentality. It is in this sense that one must interpret the retort of Estragon to Vladimir who has commented in a moment when the fabric of their play has worn thin :

Vladimir : This is becoming really insignificant.

Estragon : Not enough.

The words also state the texture of the play, its lesson, and its extension into the spectator. In deferring his appearance. Godot preserves his image—the illusion of a salvation formerly possible. The Christian form of the consolation is repeatedly subverted. Reference has already been made to the doubt cast upon the Gospels by the singularity of John's account. Its failure is now drawn into a great circle of futility that humanizes the myth so as to make it participate of the essential frailty of mankind.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(28)

Atmosphere

Defining its worlds of being and pretending, *Waiting for Godot* is part tragedy, part comedy. Its barrenness situates the tragedy—an absence of objects, of words, of illusions in the line of vision. The construct makes possible the comedy—the pathetic evidence of the protagonist, the elaborate architecture of their words, their Promethean effort to reduce the cosmic nightmare to the dimensions of an acquired habit. But such moments are few ; the stage remains essentially bare, and there is little upon which to catch laughter. In this landscape of mud and cold (the present definition of Canaan past, a land that was "warm" and "dry"), upon which a former image is at most the faint regret of what can no longer be, the Eiffel Tower of the Macon country that focusses a moment of regret is a strangely vivid landmark upon the murky horizon. Seldom is the grim eye distracted from its vision, and then only through a parenthetical commentary and an allusion to another world beyond that of the play, briefly remembered :

Vladimir : You should have been a poet.

Estragon : I was. (*Gesture towards his rags.*) Isn't that obvious.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

notes—the single utterance of all things and the single significance limited to the moment of that utterance. Each character wears a bowler hat ; it fits each poorly, but it fits them all. In the Second Act, Vladimir and Estragon come across Lucky's hat, and for a while, the three hats circulate from head to head, original ownership having been forgotten : thought is circular. (It is at best mere talking through one's hat ; Lucky's had been left on stage because, after vainly trying to dam Lucky's metaphysical outpourings, Pozzo had previously trampled on it in a fit of rage, yelling, "There is an end to this thinking !") But the one hat that decks the several faces of mankind asserts yet another synonymy, the single significance of man : frustration, pain, eternity—the certainty of being. Such had been the diagnosis of Pozzo upon first encountering the others : "You are human beings none the less. (*He put on his glasses.*) As far as one can see. (*He takes off his glasses.*) Of the same species as myself."

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(30)

The Circular Motif

Beyond the evidence there is nothing. Human solidarity is as meaningless a statement as the statement of man himself. The four clowns on this stage have difficulty maintaining themselves on their two feet ; but when they grab each other for support, the human prop fails them and all land on the floor. The tramp's shoes, unwieldy and ill-fitting, are symbolic of the essential instability of the human construct. The verticality of the cathedral once symbolized man as aspiration ; in this drama of waiting for an absent God, man in collapse falls in with the circular motive of frustration. A single linear statement contradicts the futile circle : it is the projection upon this dead world of the human prognosis, as accurate as it is bleak. Life endures only as the anticipation of suffering ; Pozzo comments as he relights his pipe, "The second one is never so sweet...as the first."

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(31)

The Tree

The personality of a tree is in its leaves, of which this one is symbolically divested. As a tree, it is a failure (significantly, Estragon's question introduces yet another vain attempt at suicide, a gesture which the tree inspires recurrently) ; its significance cannot be redeemed through botanical classification. Therefore Vladimir brings forth from within himself a name that designates the tree as merely a necessary part of the landscape. He calls it a willow—the tree that weeps. This is a form of animism to which Vladimir, the

symbol of misery, gives its shape ; but as an attempt to designate reality, his words are a failure. He admits that he does not know to what species the tree belongs, and it is very likely not a willow. But it is characteristic of him that he should even attempt to endow a part of the nightmare with the illusory substance of words. They are an important part of his existence. In a world where death and hope are both removed, the persistency of the human impulse is evident in a repeated temptation to escape, the postulates of existence notwithstanding. Estragon tries to escape more directly ; short of death itself, he assumes the foetal position and sleeps. Or, if that is not possible, he turns his back on the event, the speculation, or the threat, repeating his leit-motiv. "I'm leaving." Such is the form of his escape fantasies ; for Vladimir, they are sentences which he weaves and which Estragon cuts off so rudely.

—David I. Grossvogel

(32)

Verbal Construct

The play is thus a construct of words devised upon an absence or a void—an essentially comical endeavour. The words of this elaboration are, at a first level, merely treacherous, reverting to nonsense or evincing inopportunely a scatalogical meaning, causing the dancers of the pavane to slip upon an ever-present ordure. Puns, frequently fecal, dot the dialogue ; names betray the namesakes (in the French version, two metaphysicians whose contribution to mankind has been primarily rhetorical, are named Fartov and Belcher) ; an innocent rejoinder comments sardonically upon its context (Pozzo's reply to Vladimir who has asked him whether he had good vision before he went blind : "Oh, it was a good one indeed !"—an approximate version of the French.) At a second level the whole semantic construct becomes an inversion of Bergson's comic principle as these people are seen desperately attempting to graft human flesh upon something that is unredeemingly mechanical.

—David I. Grossvogel

(33)

Vicious Circle

Estragon's social pique endures even beyond human existence : structural concerns continue, the collapse of the structure notwithstanding. The grim fun of Beckett derives from this vicious circle, from the obstinacy with which the human urge conjures mirages whereby to maintain itself. One of the reasons for committing suicide by hanging is that, according to the legend of the mandrake, it promotes ejaculation. "Let's hang ourselves immediately !" exclaims Estragon upon hearing this item of folklore. His

exclamation rings out in this desert, upon which he is an old man past caring, and calls for death. But then, of course, that very outcry too is merely a passing fancy. The linguistic elaboration is a metaphor that comments upon the absurd view of those who endow their social posturing with an ultimate significance. But the characters of Beckett are not fooled : they know that they are seeking only a brief diversion and are, even so, conscious of their crudeness of their deception. They remain aware of their condemnation : their span of attention is limited, and the concentration on the game breaks down frequently. At such moments, abruptly, their words have another ring. There is no longer a game being played, they are fully steeped in horror, and their words suggest a gamut of reactions from the sarcasm of lucidity to the outcry of anguish that rises from depths that are beyond any vision.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(34)

Climate of Cruelty

General disbelief in the game denies sooner or later even the most rudimentary of relationships ; the usual climate of these plays is one of cruelty. Estragon tries to wipe Lucky's tears and gets kicked for his pains. When he later espies Lucky in a state of apparent torpor and tries to avenge himself by returning a few kicks, he stubs his toe. No physical reality underlies the construct of words. Part of that construct,. Vladimir's, defines human relationships and the humanity of man. But when the blind (and cruel) Pozzo is yelling for help in his misery, Vladimir continues to talk, because there is nothing else. At times, this latent cruelty takes on a more active form, either as the result of exasperation (the minimal need to contaminate another human with the venom of suffering) or, again, because of a need to maintain the illusion of existence, to create through inflicted pain an appearance of action, the speciousness of an assertion.

—*David I. Grossvogel*

(35)

Beckett's Beliefs

Beckett's work represents, with minor variations, the whole frame of mind known as 'beat'. It is near-nihilism in reaction against—to adopt a still valuable nineteenth century term—positivism. But which is the dominant trend, neo-*Weltschmerz* (making the necessary post-Romantic adjustments) or neo-positivism ? Is the 'beat' attitude and the art which goes with it the expression of a sick minority, or is it the underlying ethos of Western society as a whole ? On another score, is neo-positivism, undoubtedly vigorous

in the short term, built on a sound basis of 'health', or merely on *hubris*? If the latter, the bubble may one day burst and the Vladimirs, already conditioned to near-despair but still just keeping afloat, would be seen as 'healthier' because of their greater survival potential. A dramatic event such as a nuclear war would test this out but short of some spectacular catastrophe the answer must await the verdict of history.

Even that may not be conclusive. A section at least of modern Greek scholarship tends to regard Euripides as a 'sick' writer while others disagree. If Euripides was 'sick' it was because he was beginning to question an earlier view of the gods and the moral values they symbolised. But it might be more accurate to conclude that the gods were 'sick' and that Euripides, in initiating a reassessment, was on the line which led to future health. To many of our contemporaries a readjustment to the values of Beckett's world would be a fate little preferable to death. But it is conceivable, without swallowing the whole of his ethos, that it contains some vital elements which will be incorporated in the prevailing future ideology and that in the course of time their relevance to this will become clear. If one cannot be certain that it will be clear, it is because 'history' means historians, just as posterity means one's own children or grandchildren.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(36)

Mid-Century Mood

It seems at least highly probable that such a play as *Waiting for Godot* will be scrutinised and rescrutinised for ideological and sociological clues and will be valued as evidence of a mood of the fifties ... Whether or not it was the dominant mood, it was at least sufficiently wide-spread, in comparison with similar moods, as reflected in the arts of other periods, to be noteworthy. Its characteristics are to eliminate the heroic, to reduce 'tragic' curiosity considerably without suppressing it entirely, to lament the human condition indirectly, via irony and double-take, and—surprisingly enough in an age which was supposed to be sex-obsessed—to eschew the 'natural' passions almost completely and to set up instead a kind of humanist asceticism which some critics have assimilated to Puritanism. If it is this, it is Puritanism without the support of divine sanctions, adopted with no ulterior motives whatsoever. One can understand this as an exercise or a penance in view of a reward, but to practise it for its own sake is a little revolutionary and is certainly the most radical challenge to the old gods that can be extracted from Beckett's work.

—*Geoffrey Brereton*

(37)

Critical Interest in Beckett

Despite the fact that Samuel Beckett has been writing with some consistency since the early 1930s, genuine critical interest in him dates only from the 1950s. The first articles of any substance in English have been published since about 1954, and these early ones (such as Edith Kern's "Drama Stripped for Inaction : Beckett's Godot", Yale French Studies, No. 14) are largely concerned with the plays. It is not really until the Beckett issue of *Perspective* in 1959 that we have a substantial body of essays devoted to the novels. A glance at Ruby Cohn's checklist in this special Beckett issue reveals that the Irish-born writer was far from being the critics' favourite among contemporary writers. Most of the items... are relatively short and tend mainly to be extended book reviews or survey articles. Ruby Cohn's introduction to the Autumn 1959 *Perspective* is interesting because of certain biographical insight—she is among the first to puncture the myth of Beckett's unapproachability—and some very sane judgments of the work, especially the novels. Her introduction is followed by a series of articles which concentrate principally on the fiction and use a thematic rather than a technical or structural approach. Three of the essays point out the Cartesianism in Beckett and underscore the philosophical basis of the novels.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

(38)

Critical Attitudes to Beckett

After 1959 Beckett ceases to be (to use Cyril Connolly's expression) a "condemned playground" for critics. Attempts have been made to place him in congenial literary surroundings and to explain his debts to earlier writers. Kenneth Allsop tried to place him in the company of the then faddish "Angry Young Men" in *The Angry Decade* (1958), whereas a variety of other critics have tried to see his novels as examples of the *nouveau woman.* From Martin Esslin on, the tendency has been to view Beckett's plays as part of the theatre of the absurd. The earlier writers whose names have frequently been linked with Beckett are Dante, Sterne, Swift, Proust, Joyce, Kafka, and Celine ; tl philosophers are so numerous that we can merely say that they extend from the pre-Socratics through the Logical Positivists, and include Descartes and Leibniz.

As Beckett continues to gain literary respectability these influence-hunting games will doubtless expand and more explanations will be offered for the genesis and direction of his experiments. Critics have been faced since the early 1950s with Beckett's

astonishing bilingualism. One can look to the Irish phase of his work which produced *More Pricks than Kicks*, *Murphy*, *Watt*, and such later plays as *All That Fall* and *Happy Days*, then turn to a very different literary climate which produced the French trilogy, *En Attendant Godot*, *Fin de partie*, and *Comment c'est*. In many ways there is a sharp difference between the works written in English and those written in French. The levity (often assumed) of the first group makes us think of Swift, Sterne, and Joyce, but the more sombre tone of the second recalls Dostoevsky, Kafka, and the French existentialists. Thus Beckett seems to present two distinct literary mentalities—and consequently his critics have come up with every variety of ingenious solution to the enigmas posed by his work.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

(39)

Names and Objects

His choice of names, for example, has caused considerable speculation. By deflating the importance of names, by attaching tags of anonymity to most of his characters (calling them by such stoc Irish surnames as Murphy, Molloy, and Malone), he has helped bring about a startling revolt from the Victorian notion of suggestive and whimsical names. Critics have fondly played with the M and W which are the initial letters of so many of the characters in the novels; there is little agreement except for the assurance that Beckett's insistent use of the same two consonants is not capricious.

The fascination with objects, what J. Robert Loy in a *PMLA* article has called "things", is another aspect of Beckett which has intrigued his commentators. The famous sixteen "sucking stones" of Molloy, the pencil stub in *Malone*, the bicycles and umbrellas which recur everywhere in his work are symptoms of an almost primitive addition to totemistic practice. Hugh Kenner, for example, calls the Beckett-man-on-a-bicycle a "Cartesian centaur," which gives this new condition of movement special metaphorical properties.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

(40)

Some Aspects of Beckett's Art

Beckett the "self-translator" has inspired commentaries by some of his most gifted critics, from Hugh Kenner and Ruby Cohn to John Fletcher. They have studied the English and French versions of the novels and plays, determined the reasons for their differences, and characterized Beckett's style in the two languages. Fletcher's

succinct statement is worth quoting : "He writes spare, but idiomatic French with somewhat idiosyncratic punctuation and rhythms that are his own, basically Irish, transposed. His early English is dense, allusive, clever ; his later style imitates the spareness of his French, but is unmistakably and beautifully Irish..." (*Samuel Beckett's Art*, 1967).

These are a few of the unusual aspects of Beckett's work which have intrigued his commentators. To explain the "man behind the work," there has been an attempt at biography, some of it quite capricious and unauthorized. Peggy Guggenheim's *Out of This Century* (1946) surrounded Beckett with a cloak of indolence ; she referred to him obliquely as Oblomov, after Goncharov's inactive hero. The gossipy tone of these intensely female memories could do little to advance Beckett's reputation or help the cause of his future biographers. Peggy Guggenheim repeated much of the same material in her later *Confessions of an Art Addict* (1960) and this time referred to him directly as Samuel Beckett. She repeated verbatim such intriguing statements as, "Ever since his birth, he had retained a terrible memory of life in his mother's womb."

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

(41)

Interpretations of Godot

Beckett's 1952 play *En Attendant Godot* has produced a heated and sustained colloquy which is still not ended ; it is comparable to the critical dialogue engendered by Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Hopkins's "The Windhover." The comparison is especially apt when one realizes how many of Beckett's commentators, beginning with Horace Gregory, have insisted that he is a poet and that his is a "poetry of intensification" (to use the expression of Josephine Jacobsen and William Mueller). *The Waste Land* is probably less to the point because Eliot did supply a set of "program notes" to ease the problems of interpretation. Godot like Hopkins's sonnets stands rather as a kind of playground of critical controversy, wide open to conflicting and often mutually exclusive readings. Hopkins offered a crucial key to his poem by dedicating to "Christ Our Lord" but Beckett has maintained his accustomed interpretative silence ;' the broadest hint he seemed willing to offer was his remark to Alan Schneider (*Chelsea Review*, Autumn 1958), "I am interested in the shape of ideas."

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

most active letter-writing campaigns, within recent memory, in the pages of the august London *Times Literary Supplement*. *La querelle de Godot* started innocently enough with a typically unsigned review, in the 10 February 1956 issue, with a title borrowed from Milton, "They Also Serve". A variety of letters appeared in response to the review between 24 February and 6 April. The letter-writers finally started arguing hotly among themselves—for example, the poet and critic William Empson (author of a mild and judicious letter of 30 March) received a seemingly unwarranted reproof from a Mr. John J O'Meara (6 April) who ended by suggesting, "the New Criticism is just the thing for him (Empson)". This was a harsh reproof for the author of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, which was at one time one of the bibles of the American New Critics. A certain decorum was restored by the *TLS* editorial of 13 April 1956 ("Puzzling about Godot"); an attempt was made to tread a middle ground and to suggest that the letters printed represented only a small sampling of what at the time seemed an endless correspondence. The *TLS* editorialist ended on a pleasantly conciliatory note: "The extraordinary interest which this play has aroused from so many points of view, and at so many levels, suggests that a healthy hunger for novelty is not so dead in us as we may have feared." It is particularly ironic that this exchange should have been printed in the *TLS* whose "never-failing toughness and impermeability" were admired by Beckett's Molloy. "Even farts made no impression on it."

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

(43)

Conflicting Opinions of Godot

Other literary periodicals which have opened their pages to rejoinders have had similar experiences when *Godot* was involved. Bernard Dukore published his "Gogo, Didi, and the Absent Godot" in the February 1962 issue of the new journal *Drama Survey* and was greeted a year later (February 1963) with a lengthy reply by Thomas Markus who felt Mr. Dukore had tied too much of Godot "in a neat Freudian parcel". Dukore replied in his own defense in the May 1963 issue; an editor's note at the had of his piece warned readers that no more rejoinders would be published on this subject. *The Kenyon Review* had a similar experience with Ward Hooker's "Irony and Absurdity in the Avant-Garde Theatre" (Summer 1960) when Martin Esslin felt obliged to ride his distinctive hobby-horse in a commentary revealingly entitled "The Absurdity of the Absurd" (Autumn 1960); this brief essay offers a convenient "overture" for Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*, published the following year. The always controversial *Village Voice* printed its share of responses to *Godot* pieces by Jerry Tallmer and Norman Mailer.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

(44)

Godot and the Different Schools of Criticism

The commentators on *Godot* have had an unpleasant habit of tripping over one another's toes in their urgency to elucidate the play and to find some of their own problems solved in it. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to classify these critics by linking criticism. The New Critics have never shown much interest in drama and so they have studiously avoided Beckett's play ; they have preferred the elaborate cadences of modern poetry to the "silences" of *Godot*. The myth critics have found relatively little in it to their liking. The Chicago Aristotelians and the Freudians have kept their peace. The New Humanists have also kept silent—a silence which they have awkwardly maintained for some time when confronted with any form of the avant-garde. Yet the approaches of some of these "schools" have been used intermittently in the study of *Godot*, but not with the systematic persuasion of one committed blindly to a series of *donnees* or to a critical method. Occasionally a "professional" will turn up to offer a specialized reading, such as Eva Metman with her Jungian approach in "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays".

—Melvin J. Friedman

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Beckett and His Fellow-Writers

Yet Beckett has maintained the almost uncompromising approval of his fellow writers. Beginning with Jean Anouilh's now-celebrated pronouncement on the first performance of *Godot* in 1953 ("It has the importance of the first Pirandello presented in Paris by Pitoeff in 1923"), the reaction of playwrights has clearly been in Beckett's favour. Tennessee Williams, Thornton Wilder, and William Saroyan were all fervent admirers, as Leonard Pronko has reminded us. Novelists were at least as enthusiastic—perhaps because Beckett had started his career in their midst and brought to his plays certain credentials of the fiction writer. Robbe-Grillet's pioneering essay on *Godot* is still one of the most discerning analyses of Beckett's theater. The novelist Herbert Gold was not only himself completely taken by *Godot* but remarked on the curious effect it had on another American novelist.

Norman Mailer was so stimulated that he wrote a series of columns in *The Village Voice* explaining that it was all about impotence, and when the publishers of the newspaper fired him for his pains, he paid for a full-page advertisement to have one last despairing say on the subject. (*The Nation*, 10 November 1956) Colin Wilson in his *The Strength to Dream : Literature and the Imagination* (1962) spares Beckett the embarrassment of being placed

in one of Wilson's neat critical cubbyholes and admits that "there are flashes of a Rabelaisian wit" in Beckett's work. Claude Mauriac welcomes Beckett to the ranks of the literateur and admires the "silence" and "fascinating poverty" of *Godot*.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

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Religious Problems in Godot

The majority of *Godot's* commentators have been concerned with the religious problems suggested by the play, and many have taken refuge behind the fashionable notion of existentialism. Charles McCoy in his "Waiting for Godot : A Biblical Appraisal" (*Florida Review*, Spring 1958) urges that we distinguish between "nihilistic existentialism" and Christian existentialism and insists that the latter (from Kierkegaard to Paul Tillich) offers one of the essenti.. keys to Beckett's play. Martin Esslin also leans strongly toward Kierkegaard as a shaping influence on Beckett (see his introduction to the *Twentieth Century Views*, Samuel Beckett). Yet he insists elsewhere on the Sartrean (inhilistic existentialism) side of Godot : "Although Beckett himself is not aware of any such influence, his writings might be described as a literary exposition of Sartre's Existentialism" ("Godot and His Children : The Theatre of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter," in William Armstrong, ed. *Experimental Drama*, 1963). Most of the other critics who have acknowledged the existentialist in Godot seem to lean toward the Sartrean interpretation. Thus Jacques Guicharnaud remarks that "the Sartrian analysis of the 'others' gives the existentialist theatre its basic drama. The vision of man in Godot is similar to it : a perpetual series of rebounds, in which man is constantly thrown back into his solitude" (*Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett*, 1961). Frederick Hoffman seems generally in agreement with this position when he speaks of the "existentialist comedy" in Godot, "a genre not ordinarily associated with the philosophies of Sartre et al., but in this case indispensably linked" (*Samuel Beckett : The Language of Self*, 1962). Katharine M. Wilson in her letter of 2 March 1956 to the *Times Literary Supplement* is also on the side of Sartre : "Waiting for Godot exactly fulfils Sartre's definition of an existentialist play as one which sets out to present the contemporary situation in its full horror so that the audience, finding it unendurable, may feel forced to remedy it." Finally, Robbe-Grillet's insistence on the Sartrean categories of etre-la and presence in Godot is essential to his interpretation of the play.

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Biblical Overtones

Ronald Gray, in his "Waiting for Godot : A Christian Interpretation" (*The Listener*, 24 January 1957), agrees essentially with the position taken by Fraser. He is among the first to suggest the Godot does indeed come "in the shape of Pozzo (and Lucky)." Charles McCoy in his *Florida Review* article, restates the Christian basis of the play, insisting on its biblical aspects. He agrees with Fraser that the tree, which has leaves in the second act, represents the Cross. He somewhat enlarges on Gray's position by asserting : "That for which Gogo and Didi wait does arrive. It is they who miss the appointment". Ward Hooker, in his *Kenyon Review* piece, suggests that "the play is a religious allegory." Heinz Politzer, in "The Egghead Waits for Godot" (*The Christian Scholar*, March 1959), thinks of Godot as a parable. He also calls it "the anti-mystery play of our time...one of the few experimental dramas in which Christ has won out over Oedipus as well as Priapus and Narcissus" Even Martin Esslin (in his essay in the Armstrong collection), after stating the Sartrean position, comes around to admit "its basically religious quality." Other critics, including Wallace Fowlie (*Dionysus in Paris*), Allan Lewis (*The Contemporary Theatre*), and Jerry Tallmer (essay in *The Village Voice*), arrive at the same position. Jacobsen and Mueller in *The Testament of Samuel Beckett* reinforce the critical stand of all who give the play a religious or biblical reading : "One might truthfully say that to a reader completely ignorant of the Gospels and the Mass a heavy proportion of Beckett would be totally lost."

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

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Sources of Godot

The extremes suggested by G. E. Wellwarth and G. S. Fraser are typical of the range of interpretation possible in treating *Godot*. Nothing concerned with the play has aroused more lively and interesting controversy than the source of Beckett's title. Richard Coe has told us that in an earlier version the play was called simply *En Attendant*. Martin Esslin makes clear in *The Theatre of the Absurd* that "the subject of the play is not Godot but Waiting." Alec Reid echoes this sentiment in his "Beckett and the Drama of Unknowing" (*Drama Survey*, October 1962). Even though there is general agreement that Godot is of less consequence than "waiting," the curiosity of most critics has led to innumerable conjectures about the source of Godot. Beckett was of little help when he told Alan Schneider in his *Chelsea Review* piece : "If I knew, I would have said so in the play." Robbe Grillet, following Beckett's cue, asserted in a mild and restrained voice ; almost in a

prophetic attempt to show up the foolishness of pinning Godot down too concretely: "Godot is that character for whom two tramps are waiting at the edge of road, and who does not come" (*For a New Novel*, 1965). Yet the Godot-hunters, ignoring the implicit advice of Beckett and Robbe-Grillet, have remained indefatigable. They have played every variety of word game in their attempt to unravel the mystery that Beckett obviously wished to preserve. Thus Jacobsen and Mueller have seen a portmanteau word formed from the English God and the French eau (water). Jean-Jacques Mayoux ("Le Theatre de Samuel Beckett," *Etudes Anglaise*, October-December 1957) reminds us that Godo is spoken-Irish for God. Hugh Kenner ingeniously connects the name with his own deservedly famous theory of the "Cartesian centaur" by conjuring up the name of a French racing cyclist whose last name is Godeau; Kenner has Beckett's authority on this interpretation, at least to this extent: "It may calm the skeptical reader to know that my knowledge of this man comes from Mr. Beckett." Edith Kern ("Drama Stripped for Inaction") prefers the French suffix ot as qualifying in a diminutive and amusing way the English word God; the analogy is always there with Charlot, the Frenchman's fond and somewhat intimate way of referring to Charlie Chaplin. Nathan Scott feels, on the contrary, that the ot is "intended to negate God" and uses an analogy drawn elsewhere from Beckett's work: Molloy's reference to his mother as "Mag", with the g intended as a consonant strong enough to obliterate the concept of motherhood.

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

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The Title

So much for the possibilities of the name Godot. The source for the complete title has caused similar unrest. Eric Bentley's suggestion is perhaps the most convincing we have. Harmlessly tucked away in a brilliant review of *Godot* (*The New Republic*, 14 May 1956) is Bentley's reference to Balzac's *Mercadet*. In this almost forgotten play the return of a person named Godeau is anxiously waited for: the frustration of "waiting" is as much a part of *Mercadet* as it is of Godot. Martin Esslin heartily applauded Bentley's suggestion and so have a variety of other commentators. Two have analyzed the connection at some length: Harry Butler in *Romance Notes*, Spring 1962; S A. Rhodes in *The French Review*, January 1963. Rhodes ends his "From Godeau to Godot" revealingly: "The nineteenth century social satire (*Mercadet*) gives place to a twentieth century mystery play (*Godot*)."

Although *Mercadet* has engaged more critical attention than any other source, the case Robert S. Cohen (*Modern Drama*, February 1964) makes for Simone Weil's *Waiting for God* is almost as convincing. Cohen cleverly brings biography and literary history to

his aid by pointing out that Beckett and Simone Weil were at the Ecole Normale Superieure at the same time and might have known each other, and that *Waiting for Godot* appeared a year after the posthumous publication of *Waiting for God*—so an influence by Weil on Beckett is plausible. Cohen joins Heinz Politzer and Gunther Anders in calling *Godot* a parable (Anders calls it a "negative parable") and places himself in the camp of Ronald Gray, G. S. Fraser, and Charles McCoy by referring to it as a 'religious allegory' : "*Waiting for Godot* can then be understood as a religious allegory with the catechism provided by Simone Weil."

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

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Pozzo and Lucky

Although critics generally agree on Beckett's curious latter-day r..nts, Estragon and Vladimir, they are far apart on Pozzo and Lucky. The easiest solution offered for this "couple" is that they rep.esent master and slave. Variations on this suggest the relationship between capital and labour (Colin Wilson, Vivian Mercier, J. J. Mayoux, Gabriel Vahanian) or wealth and the artist (Wolcott Gibbs). One of the most original—and certainly most pleasantly eccentric—interpretations is Lionel Abel's suggestion (*Metatheatre*, 1963) that Pozzo represents James Joyce and Lucky, Samuel Beckett. Abel finds Lucky's "think" (Richard Coe's noun) to be a parody of Joyce. He extends the interpretation into *Endgame*, finding Joyce in Hamm and Beckett in Clov. Up to this point Abel is an agreeably "lonely wanderer" in *Godot* criticism. Then he enters a familiar terrain by suggesting that Pozzo is Godot (through a circuitous route passing by the Beckett-Joyce relationship).

—*Melvin J. Friedman*

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Laughter in Godot

Beckett's scenic directions attach Didi's second laugh to his first, since it is "stifled as before, less the smile". This second laugh, which follows the first after a few minutes of playing time, punctuates the 'friends' stichomythic exchange about Godot, through which seeps anxiety about their own situation. "Where do we come in ?" Gogo wants to know. When Didi replies cryptically, "On our hands and knees," Gogo asks innocently, "We've no rights any more ?" Whereupon Didi explodes into his last laugh of the play. By Arsene's analysis, that laugh borders on both intellectual and dianoetic, for the truth of their rights seems preposterous and their unhappiness is evident, deprived of rights as they are. Even the right to laugh seems to have disappeared for Didi, who c..lares, "You'd make me laugh if it wasn't prohibited."

Though Gogo's laughter does not seem to be prohibited, it too is ambiguous. In Act 2 of *Waiting for Godot* Gogo laughs noisily when Pozzo inquires whether the two bums are friends. There is some doubt about whether Gogo is laughing because he thinks that they are friends, or are not friends, but he apparently knows the truth that arouses his intellectual laugh. And even as Gogo indulges in his intellectual laugh, the theater audience is indulging in a different intellectual laugh, for, as Didi points out, Pozzo couldn't be less interested in whether or not the two bums are friends. What he wants to know is whether they are friends of his : Gogo laughs at the truth which he misunderstands in Pozzo's question, and we laugh at his misunderstanding.

—*Ruby Cohn*

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Laughter and Tears

Gogo's first laugh—evidently a series of laughs, embraced by the scenic directions "laughs noisily" and "convulsed with merriment"—is also inspired by Pozzo, since he "laughs noisily", when Pozzo cannot find his pipe. Gogo's laugh at Pozzo's loss is an example of Arsene's *risus purus*, and that purity is emphasized when Pozzo is "on the point of tears" while Gogo is "convulsed with merriment" at the offstage urination of Didi, which also tnvolves suffering. Gogo's laugh begins at the unhappiness of Pozzo, and continues at the unhappiness of Didi ; in the equation for a straight line $y=mx+b$, Beckett's m stands for mirthless.

Although both friends laugh, and Lucky weeps, Pozzo alone indulges in both tears and laughter, and he includes both reactions in a philosophical pronouncement : "The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh (*He laughs*)." Within his tightly closed system, then, he has just deprived someone of laughter by laughing himself, and since, in the remainder of that speech, Pozzo suggests that laughter at large is associated with happiness, he has perhaps deprived someone of happiness too.

—*Ruby Cohn*

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Selected Critical Questions With Answers

Q. 1. Compare and contrast the various human relationships in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 2. Write a note on the Pozzo-Lucky relationship, and comment on what it might be meant to represent.

Or

Q. 3. Do you think that the Pozzo-Lucky relationship has any symbolic dimensions ?

Or

Q. 4. Write a note on the relationship between Estragon and Vladimir. To what extent are they complementary personalities ?

Or

Q. 5. Compare and contrast the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky and Vladimir and Estragon. Are there any cross-parallels in the two relationships ?

Or

Q. 6. What idea do you form of the human relationships of Godot ?

Introductory

There are only four full-fledged characters in *Waiting for Godot*, arranged in pairs of two each. In addition there is the absent Godot whose human relationships come to our notice and attention indirectly. Godot is connected with his servants, including the boy who brings the message in each act as well as with the two tramps who are his dependants, or at least, hope to be his dependants The first two relationships are in sharp contrast with

each other, though they are not without cross-parallels. The third relationship is in contrast with one of the other two, and parallels the other.

Estragon and Vladimir

The two tramps are almost the opposite of each other in nature and temperament, though their general situation in life is identical. It is a long-standing relationship, though the half century that is mentioned in the play more than once need not be taken literally. Estragon and Vladimir worked together in the 'Macon country' in the past, picking grapes for their master. Estragon remembers this and mentions it himself at the end of Act I, though he seems to have forgotten it completely in Act II. The nature of the relationship between the two was the same then as it is now. Estragon was the impatient and impulsive friend, Vladimir the strong, patient and protective one. Those were the days when even the tramps could do something decisive and significant, i.e. Estragon did actually make an attempt to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Rhone and Vladimir was responsible for the significant activity of fishing him out and thus saving his life. Another activity in which they could then have participated jointly, now recurs to them as only a missed opportunity—they ought to have climbed up Eiffel Tower and jumped to their death, hand in hand, from there. The time for that is irrevocably gone, for no one would let them go up the Tower now, because they look so unkempt and out-at-elbows that the purpose of their going there would at once become apparent to the onlooker.

Present Relationship

Vladimir continues to be the stronger partner even now and performs the protective role as before. It seems that it is Vladimir who gathers the food for both of them. He has a store of carrots, turnips and radishes from which he offers something to Estragon from time to time. Estragon is beaten every night but Vladimir has no such problems. In fact he insists that if he had been with Estragon he would have saved him from being beaten. When Estragon thinks that 'they' are coming, he hides himself behind the tree in fear, but Vladimir stands his ground, apparently quite unafraid of whoever the fearsome oncomers may be. Vladimir seems to be the senior partner in this relationship otherwise also. It is he who has managed the previous interview with Godot, and it is to him that Godot's boy brings the message. Pozzo also attaches greater importance to Vladimir than to Estragon.

Contrasted Natures

The two tramps present a contrast in nature and temperament. Vladimir seems to be quiet, reserved and comparatively mature.

Estragon is impulsive, easily offended, sensitive and given to resentful quarrels. Every now and then he threatens Vladimir that he is quitting. He says more than once that it would be better for them if they parted from each other, and Vladimir has to remind him that he has done so several times but came crawling back to him each time. Vladimir is religious by nature ; Estragon, though not an atheist, is more inclined to indulge in irony at the expense of Christianity. Estragon claims that he was once a poet. Actually Vladimir can be as poetic as Estragon, as we see in the long exchange between the two about the dead voices. In fact in his soliloquy in Act II, where he alters and elaborates some of the words of Pozzo, Vladimir is seen to be a poet of a high order. Estragon seems to be fond of teasing Vladimir and also of trying to confuse him.

Pozzo and Lucky

The relationship between Pozzo and Lucky is reflected in the physical bond that holds them together—the link of the rope. The relationship between them is that of slave and master, though in Act II it takes on another aspect, that of the dumb leading the blind. The relationship represents the exploitation that is a feature of social life. Pozzo is one of the haves, dining on chicken and wine ; Lucky is the have-not to whom he throws the gnawed bones. Lucky has in the past been intellectually useful to Pozzo but now he is only a source of entertainment. The drudgery and inhuman treatment have reduced Lucky to the level of an animal ; in fact he is even below the level of animals - a mere machine—in some respects. The Lucky of the past was an artist and intellectual, now he is only a clown or a performing animal.

Attachment

Pozzo treats Lucky worse than an animal. He invariably refers to him as pig and hog. He attracts his attention by pulling violently on the rope that is round Lucky's neck. The tramps notice that the rope has eaten a running ulcer into Lucky's flesh. Lucky is made to carry all sorts of baggage. Yet he does not resist or complain. According to Pozzo Lucky keeps on holding the luggage all the time because he does not want to leave Pozzo s service ; he hopes that his zeal might favourably impress his master. However, Pozzo is determined to get rid of the slave. He announces, in Act I, that he is taking Lucky to a fair where he hopes to sell him for a good price. Lucky is vicious to strangers. He kicks Estragon painfully when the latter approaches him, in Act I, to wipe away his tears. This is the only occasion when Lucky displays human feelings. Pozzo has remarked that creatures like Lucky ought to be exterminated ; hearing these words Lucky begins to cry. Otherwise, Lucky is completely devoid of human feelings and reactions. On the other hand, Pozzo, at least of

Act I, is vain and egotistical. He behaves with the tramps like a lord. He tries to impress them by his high-sounding description of the twilight. It amuses him to think that he and the tramps belong to the same human species. There is a change in this relationship in Act II. The blind Pozzo is now helpless ; he needs Lucky to show him the way. Little wonder, therefore, that we no longer hear him talk of disposing of his slave. The two stumble and fall together ; if they cannot get up by themselves, they wait till somebody arrives to give them a hand. Lucky is now completely dumb. Pozzo has become blind but he seems to have attained some understanding of the human situation.

Godot and His Dependants

Godot resembles Pozzo in having a large retinue of servants and dependants. He also seems to be some sort of medieval landlord. He has agents and correspondents working for him. He has a shepherd who minds the sheep and a goatherd who minds the goats Godot is capricious in his relationships ; he beats the one but loves the other. He has given some sort of hope to the tramps but it seems extremely unlikely if he would ever do anything tangible for them. The tramps are afraid of Godot, so is the boy. Thus Godot rules mainly through fear.

Cross-Parallels

Both the paired characters are complementary in nature and temperament. Members of each pair are interdependent. Estragon cannot do without Vladimir's protection. In spite of his admission that he felt better in Estragon's absence, Vladimir cannot do without him either. Perhaps he needs someone who should nag him, someone on whom he may lavish care and affection. Pozzo has fed Lucky physically, whereas Lucky has provided him food for the mind. In Act II, Pozzo, the master, owns the slave, as before. The slave, now dumb, is, however, no longer merely the carrier, he is also the blind man's guide Pozzo has been no more successful in getting rid of Lucky than Estragon has been in running away from Vladimir.

Symbolic Meanings

Some symbolic meanings are quite obvious in the three inter-relationships ; several other levels of meaning have been discovered by various critics. Godot may be God, terrible and white-bearded, as he is conceived in the Old Testament. The tramps' waiting for him may thus be humanity's vain hope of salvation. The two tramps may be representative human beings who must keep each other company, quarrelling or blathering, until they find a rope to hang themselves, or until final night makes all waiting unnecessary. Being poor and unprovided, they are typical specimens of common, anti-heroic humanity. The tramps, like Pozzo and

Lucky, also seem to symbolise human regression, that is to say, the deterioration or 'backward evolution' in humanity. Interesting and even fantastic, symbolic meanings have been discovered by critics in the Pozzo-Lucky relationship. It has been said that Pozzo is James Joyce, whereas Lucky is Beckett himself. Pozzo has been interpreted as Capital, Lucky as Labour. According to some, Pozzo is the vulgar Patron, while Lucky is the Artist. It has even been suggested that Pozzo really is what Estragon at first takes him to be – Godot himself. Pozzo has also been identified as the Old Testament God in Act I and the humane God of the New Testament in Act II. Even Lucky has been identified as Christ, whereas Pozzo has been held to be the antithesis of Godot. The variety of explanations is a proof of the richness of the play.

Q. 7. In what respect does *Waiting for Godot* resemble Existentialist literature ?

Or

Q. 8. Write a note on the treatment of time in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 9. How is the problem of existence looked upon in *Waiting for Godot* ?

Or

Q. 10. Bring out the theme of the distinction between two categories of time in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 11. How does this play treat the distinction between the momentary and the eternal ?

Or

Q. 12. Bring out the theme of time and identity in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 13. Write a note on the concept of the 'Other' in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 14. What is the final comment of Beckett in *Waiting for Godot* on questions of existence and essence ?

Introductory

In certain respects Beckett's work is quite different from that of Sartre and other early exponents of Existentialism. However, there is sufficient resemblance between the standpoint of Beckett and that of the Existentialists to warrant a comparison of the two and to study *Waiting for Godot* as a play having Existentialist elements. The closest resemblance lies in the fact that both views give a lot of emphasis to the treatment of Time. As a matter of fact, consideration of Time must form a part of any view of existence.

Derivation

Theories of Time derive ultimately from either Bergson or Proust. Proust, as well as those who have studied him, have concentrated on the distinction between 'clock time' (chronometric time) and subjective time or time as experienced. Clock time is a means of measuring natural time. We can escape natural time only by taking recourse to illusion or the supernatural. Beckett's own study of Proust also pays attention to this aspect. At that time Existentialism was yet to emerge as a well-defined concept.

Basic Position.

Basically, a discussion of Time has been a subject of perennial controversy : "Given consciousness, memory and apprehension, the question of Time is not and cannot be new. Expressed as the contrast between (natural) time and eternity, with the desire either to escape permanently from the tyranny of the first into the second, or to capture 'eternal moments' from natural time and preserve them from its ravages—usually by means of an apparently transcendent ecstasy, or sometimes more artificially by the use of drugs—it was a commonplace of Romantic and pre-Romantic thought. Such universally understood cliche-quotations as 'Time was abolished', '*O temps, suspends ton vol* !', 'One crowded hour of glorious life...' contain the whole of the basic concept, upon which every intellectual elaboration will be built. It is possible to be fascinated by these elaborations without experiencing intense enthusiasm. They are rationalisms of what everyone knows instinctively from fancy." This has been pointed out by Pascal also in his discussion of Time.

Two Types of Time

The distinction between clock time and subjective time is one of the themes of *Waiting for Godot*. This is quite natural since one becomes painfully conscious of time when one is waiting. The passage of time is not absolute but relative to one's mental condition. The tramps' major problem is make time pass in such a way that they are the least bothered by it : "Vladimir and Estragon constantly

Vladimir : Yes, yes. Come on, we'll try the left first.

Estragon : We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist ?

Conclusion

The conclusion to which all this leads is a pretty hopeless one. Neither time, nor existence, nor reality, nor memory or the past have any meaning or significance : "Acts are meaningless, time does not flow consecutively, memory seems deceptive, existence is an 'impression', or perhaps a dream, happiness is acutely absent—though removed, the gap it has left still aches. This tooth-aching void supplies as good a metaphor as any other for the Nothing which the two tramps feel within and without them. They are on the point of becoming hollow men in a possibly hollow universe. This can be related to various philosophies of existence and essence, but as presented on the stage it really demands no other equipment in an audience than the bond of common perception."

Q. 15. Write a note on the mood and atmosphere in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 16. The English version of *Waiting for Godot* describes it as a tragi-comedy. What is your view ?

Or

Q. 17. Bring out the farcical elements in *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 18. To what extent is it correct to describe *Waiting for Godot* as an Absurd play ?

Or

Q. 19. Write a note on *Waiting for Godot* as a comedy.

Or

Q. 20. Bring out the tragic touches in *Waiting for Godot*. Is the final impression of the play tragic ?

Or

Q. 21. Bring out the note of anguish and despair in *Waiting for Godot*.

Introductory

The English edition of *Waiting for Godot*, published in 1956, describes the play as a "tragi-comedy in two acts". The hybrid term 'tragi-comedy' is in any case too vague to be an adequate description of the nature and atmosphere of any play. It is all the more inadequate in the case of a play as rich and complex as *Waiting for Godot*. The atmosphere of this play is a blend of wit and humour, farce, pathos and even, occasionally, anguish which is akin to the tragic. The play has also Existentialist and Absurdist touches. Towards the end there is a mysterious note which is quite akin to the Romantic.

Wit, Humour and Farce

Waiting for Godot has many touches which are genuinely comic, whether because of the wit of the dialogue or the humour of character or situation. There is also comedy on the lower plane, comedy of the type seen on the music-hall stage. Quite understandably this occasionally degenerates into the farcical, or it would be more correct to say that it assumes the aspect of the Absurd. Often, of course, the comedy is not unalloyed with more serious implications, so that the total atmosphere is closer to that in 'dark comedy'. The wit is at times a blind for a more profound response. For example, Vladimir is determined not to hear Estragon's night-mare. The latter pleads with him in vain to hear him, saying that there is nobody else to whom he may communicate his private nightmares. When Vladimir is determined not to hear him, Estragon turns the tables on him by implying that Vladimir is *afraid* of listening to his dream because he finds it impossible to cope with another nightmare, the universe :

> *Estragon* : I had a dream.
>
> *Vladimir* : Don't tell me !
>
> *Estragon* : I dreamt that—
>
> *Vladimir* : DON'T TELL ME !
>
> *Estragon* : (*Gesture towards the universe*). This one is enough for you ?

Sometimes the wit arises from the fact that one of the speakers either really mistakes the meaning of the other, or pretends to do so. Or the speaker puts a construction on the words of the other which he never intended. An example of the former can be seen when Vladimir wishes to tell Estragon that he has done enough of begging and must stop it now. Estragon applies the word 'enough' to the five francs he has asked for, rather than to his own beggarlike behaviour :

> *Estragon* : Even ten francs would be welcome.
>
> *Vladimir* : We are not beggars !

Pozzo : Is there anything I can do, that's what I ask myself, to cheer them up ? I have given them bones, I have talked to them about this and that, I have explained the twilight, admittedly. But is it enough, that's what tortures me, is it enough ?

Estragon : Even five.

Vladimir : (*To Estragon, indignantly*). That's enough !

Estragon : I couldn't accept less.

Pozzo : Is it enough ?

An example of the latter type is seen in the situation where Pozzo, not knowing the reason why Vladimir has gone away, says to Estragon that Vladimir ought to have waited. Estragon, who knows why Vladimir could not have waited longer (since he was feeling the pressure of a full bladder) makes a witty comment on it :

Pozzo : (*Looking up*). You didn't by any chance see—(*He misses Vladimir.*) Oh ! He's gone ! Without saying good-bye ! How could he ! He might have waited !

Estragon : He would have burst.

Farcical Touches

There are several farcical touches in the play. However, most of these have a deeper aim than is immediately apparent. For example, we have a situation where Estragon and Vladimir put on and take off each other's hat as well as that of Lucky again and again. Although this is farcical, it has the aim of telling the reader that in the world of the tramps there is no place for significant actions but only for trivial ones. The repetition of the ritual dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir about why they cannot leave is also farcical, though just below the level of farce we have the implication that the tramps are caught in a net from which they cannot escape. Perhaps the most farcical situation in the play is the one where the tramps are testing the strength of the cord with which they wish to hang themselves. Estragon who has removed the cord from his trousers, stands there, pulling at the cord at one end, while his trousers have come down to his ankles. The cord breaks under the strain. One cannot have an uninhibited laugh at the situation, for there is in it also something deeply uncomfortable, the situation of two wretches who find their way to suicide also barred.

Anguish and Despair

Waiting for Godot has several moments of anguish and despair. Right on the first page we learn that being beaten by

unknown men is a daily occurrence for Estragon, which he mentions in a most matter-of-fact way : "Beat me ? Certainly they beat me." The bodily ailments that afflict them, Estragon's feet and Vladimir's kidneys, are also to be taken for granted. The tramps resent that they should be asked whether it still hurts. It goes without saying that it hurts all the time. When Vladimir asks Estragon whether his boots are hurting him, he responds : "Hurts ! He wants to know if it hurts !" A little later Estragon asks Vladimir about his kidney trouble and the latter replies in the same words : "Hurts ! He wants to know if it hurts !" In fact his trouble is so bad that it does not even permit him to laugh. Life lies all bleak and barren before them, and the only valid comment on it is the one with which the play opens : "Nothing to be done." Estragon's nostalgia about the map of the Dead Sea is also touching. Their's is a world of negations in which inactivity is the safest course ; as Estragon says : "Don't let us do anything. It's safer." The tramps are living at the barest level of existence ; carrots, turnips and radishes are all they have to eat. There is something near tragic in the hopeless waiting of Estragon and Vladimir, about which the former rightly says : "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful !" The situation of Lucky is quite pathetic, especially in view of his glorious past, as Pozzo describes it. His speech tells us that in his saner moments Lucky must have brooded deeply over the anguish of the human situation. This anguish breaks through even in his incoherent harangue :

> ...the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labours abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard (*melee, final vociferations*) tennis...the stones...so calm...Cunard...unfinished...

Tragic Elements

Waiting for Godot cannot be called tragic on the whole, in the traditional or any other sense, but it has some moments of tragic anguish. It lacks the sublimity which is believed to be the common attribute of most tragedies, yet it depicts a despair which, in view of the slenderness of hope, is nothing short of heroic. Estragon and Vladimir will come back and wait for Godot again and again, although they seem to know in their heart of hearts that he will never come. And even if he does come, there is little real hope to which they can look forward. It won't help even if he grants their request, for they did not ask him to do anything tangible for them. What they said to him was only a sort of prayer, a vague supplication. In the Second Act even Pozzo acquires a near tragic

status. There is something very moving in the plight of Estragon, who sleeps on as the boy tells Vladimir that Godot won't come even that day. All through the play, Vladimir has behaved as sober, level-headed and capable of enduring hopeless agony patiently. Now even his pain seems beyond endurance, as we see in his soliloquy in which he repeats a sentence of Pozzo, amplifying it so as to give it an altogether new significance :

> Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (*He listens.*) But habit is a great deadener.

Q. 22. How far is it correct to describe *Waiting for Godot* as a play in which "nothing happens twice" ?

Or

Q. 23. Do you think *Waiting for Godot* suffers because of comparative or total lack of action ?

Or

Q. 24. Discuss *Waiting for Godot* in the light of the traditional principles of dramaturgy.

Or

Q. 25 Do you think *Waiting for Godot* possesses form and structure underlying its apparent amorphousness ?

Or

Q. 26. Write a note on the form, structure and theme of *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 27. In what sense can *Waiting for Godot* be called a well-made play ?

Or

Q. 28. To what extent does waiting determine the form of *Waiting for Godot* ?

Introductory

To a certain extent the traditional principles of dramaturgy and the traditional criteria for judging a play are inapplicable and even irrelevant to *Waiting for Godot*. It has been deliberately

constructed on the basis of a 'plot' which is sparse to the extent of being almost non-existent. To put it briefly, the plot of the play consists of Estragon and Vladimir's waiting for a man called Godot, who ultimately does not come. In addition there are two episodes of Lucky and Pozzo. There is nothing that 'happens' in the episodes either. Thus, superficially speaking, it is right to describe *Waiting for Godot* as a play in which nothing happens twice, in the main story as well as in the episodes.

Action Versus Incident

It is wrong to think that the action of a play necessarily consists of incidents. Action is the enactment of the theme, which may take place through exclusion of incident as well as through a profusion of it. A play can quite legitimately give prominence to dialogue rather than 'action' of the usual sort. The very theme of a play might demand that there must be the minimum of action in the sense of incident. *Waiting for Godot* is certainly a play of this sort.

Theme of Futility and Helplessness

The basic theme of the play is that Estragon and Vladimir are absolutely at the mercy of someone called Godot who has asked them to wait for him at a certain place, without having made any definite promise that he would come. They have no option but to wait for him, not only because they expect him to do something for him but also because they cannot afford to annoy him by dropping the vague appointment. They have to employ every resource that they know in order to make the long and hopeless wait endurable. The major resource is that of conversation and they employ it to the maximum. Naturally dialogue predominates the play. It is self-conscious dialogue because it has an ulterior purpose, that of making time hang less heavy. So the tramps encourage each other to keep the ball rolling. Sometimes when the conversation seems to flag they have even to plead with each other to say something. They deliberately refute each other, agree with each other, question each other and even abuse each other so that the conversation goes on. They do not 'do' anything because this is integral to their situation. All that Estragon can 'do' is to eat a carrot when he is feeling particularly hungry, or pull off and put on his boot. All that Vladimir can do is to remove his hat, peer inside it, shake it thoroughly and put it on again. In addition he also goes out when he can no longer contain himself, for, as Estragon says, he would otherwise burst. So helpless are they that there is not even a way of escape or a hiding place open to them. Their conversation tells us that at least with Estragon this has almost always been the case, except for the one occasion when he threw himself into a river.

Pozzo-Lucky Episode

In the Pozzo-Lucky episode, or subplot, also there is no action'. In Act I Pozzo announces his intention of selling off Lucky. In Act II we see, not only that he has not put this intention into practice but has even forgotten that he ever intended doing so. In fact the reader sees that since Pozzo has now gone blind he cannot afford to do without Lucky. Lucky himself is tied to Pozzo. He can do only what his master orders him to. His dance of the 'Net' makes it clear that Lucky also is helpless. His speech in Act I reflects the helplessness of humanity ; the action, whether tennis or something else, is all illusory. What is real is the abode of stones and the skull. Even small actions like that of going away are deliberately omitted. Each act closes with the announcement by the tramps that they are leaving ; yet they are seen to be standing there immobile. All this stresses their helplessness and inability to act. Throughout the play there is a repetition of the dialogue which centres round Estragon's suggestion that they should leave, and ends with Vladimir's pointing out that they cannot since they are waiting for Godot.

Conclusion

Although it is true, literally speaking, that *Waiting for Godot* is a play in which nothing happens twice, this does not mean an adverse judgment on the play. It is a very well constructed play, but its form and construction are determined by the nature of its theme. It has rightly been said that if the play had ten more acts, they would have ended in just the same way, with Godot sending a message that he is not coming and the tramps deciding to leave for the night but with a helpless determination to come and resume the wait the next afternoon. The only other action open to them, apart from that of blathering is that of going through their exercises, practising their extensions and elongations, relaxations and rotations.

Q. 29. What is the secret of the phenomenal success and popularity of *Waiting for Godot* ?

Or

Q. 30. Account for the fact that *Waiting for Godot* achieved immense popularity both with readers and spectators although it lacks both conventional plot and female characters.

Or

Q. 31. Bring out the factors in *Waiting for Godot* which are responsible for making it a gripping and popular play.

Or

Q. 32. How far is it correct to say that the popularity of *Waiting for Godot* is owing to the element of Absurdity in it ?

Or

Q. 33. Comment on the view that in spite of its overall originality *Waiting for Godot* is made up of traditional elements.

Or

Q. 34. Do you subscribe to the view that *Waiting for Godot* ultimately tends to enhance rather than lower one's belief in human dignity ?

Introductory

Waiting for Godot can be looked upon as a play depicting human determination in the face of despair, boredom and uncertain hope. There is every reason for the tramps to become heart-broken and abandon their wait. Yet they go on waiting, putting even the idea of suicide to use as a device with which one might play in order to hasten the march of time. While it is generally believed that *Waiting for Godot* satirises unbounded pessimism, it is equally possible to look upon it as a play depicting an optimistic response to life when there is so much to shatter that optimism. This is only one element in the paradoxical quality of this play. Still another is that the play is at once highly original in tone and atmosphere, and as ancient in appeal as the Book of Job.

Traditional Element

The blend of tradition and originality is no doubt one of the reasons why *Waiting for Godot* is such a popular play. From one viewpoint, it is a modernised form of the Morality play. Raymond Williams explains the difference between old and new morality thus : "The structure of feeling on which the morality form is based acts from a common centre outwards : it is a demonstration of faith. The structure of feeling of *Waiting for Godot* is the loss of faith, and an essentially uncertain waiting ; it is not, from a centre, a demonstration ; but is peripheral, fragmentary, blurred." The same critic believes that this play is an unusually clear example of the expressionistic method in which an essentially private feeling, which is incommunicable in direct terms because of its isolation, is dramatised by its projection into contrasting characters which are also contrasting modes of action. He traces in the content of the play a continuity with the world of the later works of Strindberg, as well as that of Synge and Joyce. Other critics find the antecedents of *Waiting for Godot* in the works of post-naturalistic dramatists and the portrayal of the Common Man or the Little Man by Charlie Chaplin. It is possible to take the ancestry back to the plays of Chekhov, e.g., *The Cherry Orchard.*

Absurdist Element

Beckett is considered to be an important figure among the French Absurdists ; more particularly, *Waiting for Godot* is looked upon as one of the masterpieces of Absurdist literature. There is no doubt that the element of Absurdity is responsible for making this play so engaging and lively. Like committed Absurdists, Beckett combats the traditional notions of Time. It attacks the two main ingredients of the traditional view of Time, i.e. Habit and Memory. We find Estragon in the main story and Pozzo in the episode, combating the conventional notions of Time and Memory. For Pozzo, particularly, one day is just like another, the day we are born indistinguishable from the day we shall die

Poetic and Prosaic

Still another paradoxical quality of *Waiting for Godot* is that it is at the same time an indictment of the poetic and the emotional and an embodiment of it. Estragon is a great critic of Vladimir because of the latter's hope and trust ; yet he is more impulsive than his companion and has been a poet himself. Indeed in one long exchange both the tramps display a great gift of making poetry out of the most unpromising material :

Estragon. It's so we won't think.

Vladimir. We have that excuse.

Estragon. It's so we won't hear.

Vladimir. We have our reasons.

Estragon. All the dead voices.

Vladimir. They make a noise like wings.

Estragon. Like leaves.

Vladimir. Like sand.

Estragon. Like leaves.

Vladimir. Rather they whisper.

Estragon. They rustle.

Later, Vladimir himself, otherwise the more prosaic of the two, shows the sensibility of a genuine poet when he comments on Estragon's relative ignorance and recalls some of the woids of Pozzo. Vladimir is not satisfied with the appearance of awareness as true awareness. He is sure that Estragon will tomorrow have forgotten everything that he has seen today. And some of it he has not

even seen ; for he goes on sleeping peacefully while Godot's messenger tells Vladimir that his master won't come today. Vladimir is not certain that his view of things is the real one. He would say tomorrow that along with Estragon he waited here for Godot till nightfall ; that Pozzo came and talked to them, but he is not certain that this would be a statement of reality. It is possible that in some deeper sense Vladimir is just as ignorant as the sleeping Estragon :

> (*He looks again at Estragon.*) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on.

The Crispness of the Dialogue

Beckett is a master of dialogue. This quality of Beckett's writings is another reason why *Waiting for Godot* is such a popular play. With only one or two exceptions, and not taking into account the harangue of Lucky and the set speeches of Pozzo, the dialogues in this play are brief and concentrated. The rhythm they use is that of common speech. Occasionally they have the cleverness and wit of the dialogue of the music-hall stage. There is also deliberate use of misunderstanding as well as irony and double-take. Sometimes the dialogue attains a ritualistic quality, at other times it is poetic. Soliloquy is kept to the minimum ; aside is entirely dispensed with. Quite a few of the dialogues are accompanied by actions, gestures or movements which give them a truly dramatic quality. This is particularly true in the case of the speeches of Pozzo, which, almost invariably, are accompanied by stage directions explaining Pozzo's actions as he speaks the words.

Conclusion

The wide appeal of *Waiting for Godot* owes also to the fact that it is a play which evokes a complex response. It can be looked upon as a farce, a comedy, an Existentialist play, an Absurd play, a play depicting the topical mood and situation, a modern Morality play, or a near-tragic dramatisation of boredom, anguish and suffering. Its despair is said to have proved particularly congenial to the mood of the nineteen fifties. The fact that Beckett is a great craftsman and has made *Waiting for Godot* a great stage-play is also responsible for its success in the theatre. It is because of Beckett's great craftsmanship that we do not feel the absence of female characters in the play ; there are other things to grip our attention. When we speak of the great success of *Waiting for Godot* in the theatre, we must not forget that in some ways it was the result of a negative fact. When the play was first staged in London, there was no great playwright whose work could offer anything to compete with the highly original and technically perfect work of Beckett. The play appealed to all classes because it is not esoteric. A thoughtful man will read more into it, but even the most unsophisticated will grasp enough to interest him.

Q. 35. Write a note on the 'meanings' of *Waiting for Godot.*

Or

Q. 36. What is the religious significance of Godot? Discuss in detail.

Or

Q. 37. What are the bearings of *Waiting for Godot* on Christianity?

Or

Q. 38. To what extent can we say that 'Godot' is 'God'?

Or

Q. 39. To what extent can we compare waiting in this play with the hope of salvation?

Or

Q. 40. Bring out the difference between the two tramps from the viewpoint of the religious connotations of Godot.

Or

Q. 41. Write a note on the conception of Godot as that of Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Or

Q. 42. Do you think that *Waiting for Godot* satirises Christian hope?

Introductory

Waiting for Godot is a complex and subtle play and as such yields a variety of meanings. However, the meanings by which the play must be judged are those which can be grasped by an average theatregoer or reader. Otherwise the play cannot be regarded as a dramatic success. All the same, there have been numerous interpretations of the play which bring out some of its subtle implications or analyse the play along some 'fringe-thesis'. In the main, four such approaches can be pinpointed—the treatment of Christianity in the play, Beckett's attitude to the problem of existence, and his views about the concepts of Time and Nothingness.

Treatment of Religion

It is inevitable to regard the play as having a bearing on Christianity, for the very title has the word 'Godot' which seems to have been intentionally employed for the resemblance it bears to 'God'. The precise connection between Godot and God is immaterial : "It hardly matters, whether, or in what sense, Godot

stands for 'God'. But it is hard to attach him to any other concept. He is the external figure who can bring a change to their immobility. For Vladimir and Estragon he certainly exists. Their uncertainty bears on his attitude towards them." The tramps have a very hazy idea about the person they are waiting for, and even about what he can do for them. They agree that they did not ask Godot to do anything very definite for them ; they only made a kind of prayer a vague supplication. His reply was, if anything, even vaguer. He did not say definitely that he would meet them on a particular day, but only that he might. Before replying to their supplication he would have to go through a complicated series of consultations, referring their request to his family, his friends, his agents and his correspondents and also consulting his account books and his bank balance. The tramps regard all this as nothing unusual ; they are sure that this is the normal way of disposing of such prayers.

Godot and Grace

Waiting for Godot seems to be symbolic of waiting for grace or hoping for salvation. This is crystallised in the repeated references to the mysterious account in one of the Gospels of how one thief was saved and the other was damned. One of the tramps takes hope from the fact that one out of the two sinners was saved—it appears to him to be a very comforting percentage.

Differences

The tramps betray differences in their approach to Godot regarded as a sort of God. Estragon tries once or twice to break away from the tyranny of this bleak and hopeless waiting. He believes that they are not tied down to Godot, that they have some of their rights still left to them. Vladimir, however, thinks otherwise. He believes they have surrendered all their privileges, if they ever had any. Estragon tentatively suggests that they might drop Godot ; Vladimir is apprehensive that in that case he would punish them. At the same time, Vladimir is the more hopeful of the two ; he is of the view that if Godot comes they would be saved. All the same, interpreting Godot presents several difficulties : "Godot holds their future—if they have any future—in his hands, but he does not seem very interested in them. Godot bears a sinister resemblance to Nobodaddy, less, seemingly, his impotence. He may in fact be Nobodaddy—for them, if not for some other department of the universe—and this is the shadow which haunts the play religionwise. Beckett's characters grope to construct an acceptable image of Godot/God. One of them occurs in Lucky's celebrated 'think-piece' in Act I :

> Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell.

As is clear such a conception of God does not leave much room for hope. This misgiving is further strengthened by the description of Godot which the second messenger-boy (who may, after all, be just the same as the first) gives. He answers Vladimir's question as to what Godot does, with the words : "He does nothing, sir." Vladimir has some image of Godot in his mind and he hesitantly tries to confirm this from the messenger-boy. In appearance what he says, and the answer he gets, is quite insignificant. He asks the boy if Godot has a beard and the boy replies that he has one. Vladimir is clearly nervous now ; he wants to confirm the colour of Godot's beard. When he is told that the beard is of a white colour he is clearly frightened and exclaims : "Christ have mercy on us !" Vladimir has identified Godot with Jehovah of the Old Testament and the identification instils fear into him : "Vladimir's exclamation of horror stems from the obvious truth that a twentieth-century mentality can derive little comfort from the image of an Old Testament-type God. The kind of salvation which a white-bearded Godot is likely to offer will hardly satisfy even Vladimir and Estragon, impoverished though they are. From the religious point of view, strongly implicit in the play, *Waiting for Godot* might well have been subtitled 'Nobodaddy's Revenge'." Thus one thing that stands out in the play as viewed in the light of its religious implications is that it is very much disturbing in its questioning of the ideas of grace, salvation and the appearance of a personal God upon the human scene.

Q. 43. To what extent is it correct to interpret *Waiting for Godot* as a clash between Society and the Outsider ?

Or

Q. 44. Bring out the sociological implications of *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 45. Discuss the sociological implication of the roles of Pozzo and Lucky and contrast it with that of the tramps.

Or

Q. 46. Write a note on the sidelight which this play casts on the ideas of capitalism, feudalism and the exploitation of labour.

Or

Q. 47. "This is not an attack on senile capitalism, but a more general image of society as a whole." Discuss this view of *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 48. Bring out the larger implications of the roles of Pozzo and Lucky.

Q. 49. "Some of Pozzo's speeches go beyond what seems dramatically plausible in a decaying boss-figure." Substantiate.

Or

Q. 50. What is the significance of the silencing of Lucky by Pozzo and the tramps ?

Or

Q. 51. Write a note on Beckett as a social critic on the basis of your reading of *Waiting for Godot*.

Or

Q. 52. What idea do you form from this play about Beckett's social ideology ?

Introductory

Through Lucky and Pozzo the ideas of man and society, exploited and exploiter, leisure and culture and those at whose cost they are acquired, enter the play. Each time the landlord, Pozzo, comes, one of the tramps, Estragon, thinks that Godot has arrived. His mistake is soon corrected in each case but a certain idea is still impressed on our minds : "God and Society, while not the same thing, can be easily confused with each other. Society's two complementary sides are represented by Pozzo and Lucky, who together make it up. They are totally interdependent. Without Lucky Pozzo cannot move forward, sit down to eat, or get up. Lucky cannot move either, except in response to Pozzo's shouted orders and whip-cracks. Together they compose a functioning organisation from which the two tramps are excluded, or have contracted out. Vladimir and Estragon lack any such organisational framework and cannot 'function' as isolated individuals either. Their 'exercises' whether physical or verbal, are strictly non-functional, being unrelated to any necessity or purpose, however limited. True, they serve to pass the time, but 'it would have passed in any case'." It can be seen that Estragon and Vladimir are in every sense unprivileged outsiders, real 'tramps'.

Society Versus the Outsiders

This, however, does not imply that Society, merely because it possesses some measure of organisation, is in a better shape than these social outcasts. "Its function is largely mechanical and the only defined purpose of Pozzo and Lucky's laborious journey is to reach the market where Lucky will be sold. The objective result of this would be to break their society up, but Pozzo does not see so far and airily boasts that he is not short of slaves. He not only sees that Lucky has grown sour and tiresome, so that he has no more pleasure in his company." This might be contrasted with the relationship between the tramps which, despite its occasional strains, seems built to last.

Sociological Implications

The surface meaning of the Pozzo-Lucky episode is quite clear. It is, at one level, a picture of feudalism in decline. This meaning is enhanced by the way Pozzo is represented in English productions of the play. He comes out as the traditional Irish squire or ('squireen') dressed in a blanket coat and a brown billycock : "He thunders awesomely in the manner of Colonel Blimp and is at the same time a slave to formality. In his punctiliousness and his whiplike use of sarcasm he possesses the two most resented qualities of an old governing class. He can unbend towards the two tramps with a condescension which reeks of superiority and which gradually gives way to his overwhelming need of an audience to talk to. 'Yes, gentlemen, I cannot go for long without the society of my likes... Even when the likeness is an imperfect one'. " He seems to represent capitalism at a stage when it has largely merged into the earlier dominance of the squire. All the same, in spite of the fact that outwardly Pozzo is very much the country gentleman, we must not read the play as though it merely projected 'progressive' social thinking. "This is not an attack on senile capitalism, but a more general image of society as a whole—and even conceivably a lament for it. It corresponds indifferently to any division between haves and have-nots, top-dogs and bottom-dogs. Pozzo owns and commands, Lucky produces and obeys. He is equally the beast of burden (the 'worker') and the artist and intellectual. In the past he has taught Pozzo all he knows of 'beauty, grace, truth of the first water' —a wonderfully revealing catalogue. He can still manage a tottering dance to entertain them all. He can still, at a word of command and jerk of the rope, be made to think—so long as he is wearing his hat. And, like the professional intellectual in any organised society, his 'thinking' leads by its own momentum to conclusions so discomforting and so near the bone that the others jump on him and try to shut his mouth. This is the effect of Lucky's breathlessly spoken and chaotic tirade. It ends in a seeming incoherence which is nevertheless dismally and intolerably clear :

> ...what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labours abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard (*Melee, final vociferations*) tennis...the stones...so calm...Cunard...unfinished...

The Silencing of Lucky

It would be a mistake to think that Lucky is silenced because the listeners find his torrent of words meaningless and boring. At some deeper level, Lucky's words raise uncomfortable ideas and

suggestions. None of the listeners, Pozzo least of all, is prepared to face hard truths towards which Lucky's ramble is inexorably driving : "Lucky was drawing near to the eternal immobility of bedrock ('the skull...the stones...so calm'). Deprived of his hat, the habitual, perhaps Pavlovian. stimulus, comparable at least to an Editorship or a Chair, his thinking stops finally, 'unfinished'. When he and his master appear in Act II, the physical run-down is fast catching up with the mental run-down. Lucky is now dumb and Pozzo blind. They fall flat on their faces and are unable to get up without help. Society, so far as they may be taken to represent it, is near o the point when it ceases to function altogether.

Additional Significance

Both Pozzo and Lucky have significance which is over and above any which can be brought out through an interpretation of their sociological role. The blinded Pozzo is no longer arrogant, he even becomes cringing, but he can now and then say something which is profound or disturbing. One of the most powerful sentences in the play is uttered by Pozzo, "They (the human race) give birth astride of a grave." This beautifully brings out the idea of the brevity of life : "Lines such as these do something to qualify any over-precise parallel one might be tempted to draw between the Pozzo-Lucky combination and a two-tier social order. Some of Pozzo's speeches go beyond what seems dramatically plausible in a decaying boss-figure. But, whatever language he uses (and one may suppose that it was Lucky who originally taught him to utter 'these beautiful things') his thoughts are always platitudes, so that on a wider view he can still be equated with a stagnant upper class. To his relative enjoyment of wealth and power would then be added the benefits—still relative to his capacity for using them—of a non-vocational education by social dependants." Ultimately, this only means that *Waiting for Godot* is a much richer play than is made out through any merely schematic representation of it.

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Chronology of Important Dates

1906	Samuel Barclay Beckett born on April 13, at Foxrock near Dublin, second son of William and Mary Beckett
1923	After finishing schooling, joins Trinity College, Dublin.
1926	Takes part in a cycling expedition in France.
1927	Completes B.A. in Modern Literature at Trinity College, University of Dublin.
1927-28	Teaches at Campbell College, Belfast.
1928	First meeting with fellow-Irishman, James Joyce, who exercised a life-long influence on Beckett.
1928-30	Lecturer in English at an institute in Paris.
1929	Beckett's first publication, a contribution to a collection of essays on James Joyce.
1930	Beckett's first independently published work, a poem entitled *Whoroscope*.
1930-32	Works as Assistant Lecturer in French at Trinity College, Dublin.
1931	Beckett's first dramatic work, written in collaboration with another lecturer of Trinity College, performed.
1931	Beckett awarded M.A. by Trinity College, Dublin.
1931	Publication of Beckett's only major work of literary criticism, an essay on Proust.

1932	Begins his wanderings on the Continent and in England and Ireland.
1933	Beckett's father dies and leaves him a modest income.
1934	Publication of Beckett's short stories, entitled *More Pricks than Kicks.*
1935	Beckett's poems entitled *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* published in France.
1937	Beckett decides to settle in Paris.
1938	Beckett's first novel *Murphy* published in England.
1939	Beckett briefly visits Ireland.
1941-42	**Beckett works in the Resistance movement against German occupying forces. Flees when his group is betrayed. Lives in unoccupied France, working as an agricultural labourer.**
1944	**Pays a brief visit to Ireland to see his family.**
1946-50	**The most creative half-decade of Beckett. Returns to Paris and begins writing in French only, translating some of his works into English himself.**
1951	**Two novels, *Malloy* and *Malone Dies* published in Paris.**
1952	**Beckett's most famous work, later known as *Waiting for Godot*, published in Paris as *En Attendant Godot*.**
1953	*En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) staged for the first time in Paris, on January 5.
1955	World premiere of the English version, *Waiting for Godot*, in London, on August 3.
1956	Beckett's novel, *Malone Dies*, published in New York.
1956	*Waiting for Godot* produced in New York.

1957 Beckett's play *Endgame* translated into English.

1957 Beckett's radio play *All That Fall*, broadcast by BBC.

1958 World premiere of Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape*, in London.

1958 Beckett's novel *Malone Dies* published in London.

1959 University of Dublin confers the degree of Hony. D. Litt. on Beckett.

1959 BBC broadcasts Beckett's play *Embers*.

1961 World premiere of Beckett's play *Happy Days* in New York.

1961 Beckett awarded International Publishers' Prize jointly with Borges.

1962 *Words and Music* broadcast by BBC.

1964 *Film* (scenario written by Beckett) filmed in New York.

1965 *Imagination Dead Imagine* (English) published in London.

1965 Original French version of the above work published in Paris.

1966 Beckett's work *Eh Joe* televised by BBC.

1969 Beckett awarded Nobel Prize for literature.

1970 Beckett's *Collected Works* published in New York.

1972 *The Lost Ones* published in London.

1972 *Not I* produced in New York.

1973 *Not I* published in New York.

1973 *First Love* published in London.

1977 Collection of Beckett's later work, entitled *Ends and Odds* published.

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